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THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

BY

MRS. ABEL RAM

AUTHOR OF

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL," "EMMANUEL," ETC.

"Blessed is the hand which gives an alms for the love of God and of the aged poor."—P. LE PAILLEUR

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PREFACE

In bringing this little work before the public, we have purposely set it, as it were, in the life of Jeanne Jugan, as in a frame, she being the first *quêteuse*[1] of the Family of Little Sisters of the Poor, with a view of its being essentially the history of this wonderful *quête*—a motive-power the like of which has never been known in any age or in any Order of either men or women—and also in order not to entrench upon the lives of the venerable founder and foundress, and whose history will be written at a future date by a worthier pen than ours.

Changes have been made within the last year with regard to the Novitiate, at the wish of his Holiness Leo XIII., who, as the number

[1] Collector of alms in money and kind.

of Houses multiplied and distances increased, saw inconvenience to the Little Family in the perpetual travelling to and fro of its members, and has therefore ordained that there be temporary Novitiates, under the direction of the Mother-House, in divers countries. This matter not being as yet finally defined, however, and having arisen since this book was commenced, we have thought it better to leave the chapters on the Tour St. Joseph as they stand.

HELEN RAM.

May 11, 1893.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS OF THE FIRST QUÊTEUSE.

THERE is scarcely a figure more familiar than that of the Little Sister of the Poor, walking swiftly along through the streets, half hidden under her large black cloak and closely fitting white cap, stopping at every door to ask an alms for "our poor old people," or else lifting down a big can from a modest-looking covered cart in which to collect the "crumbs from the rich man's table," the broken victuals, the coffee-grounds, the remnants of the soup-cauldron—all the precious booty which is to be converted into the daily food of some two or three hundred aged men and women housed and tended by her and her Sisters.

There are few towns of any size in Europe where the bright faces and indefatigable forms of the Little Sisters may not be seen. In France alone they have one hundred and six Houses; in Spain they have fifty-one; in the British Isles, twenty-nine; in America, thirty-nine; in Italy and Sicily, seventeen; in Belgium, thirteen; in Oceania, three; in Asia, two; in Africa,

four; in Portugal, one; finally, in Turkey, one. The old men and women actually living in their Homes at the present moment number thirty-three thousand one hundred and thirty-two, whilst of Little Sisters themselves there are no less than four thousand four hundred and seventy-five living, with, alas! already a long death-roll of one thousand and thirty-one. And yet fifty years ago this admirable Institution—perhaps the most admirable and the most wonderful of all the works ever recorded in the annals of charity—did not exist except in the external decrees of Providence, and required the word of a humble young parish priest and the co-operation of three simple country girls in a small French fishing-town to call it into being.

It is frequently thought that a holy peasant-woman of the name of Jeanne Jugan was the foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor, in consequence of her having been the first *quêteuse*—in other words, the first heroic mendicant—who, taking her basket on her arm, went meekly and bravely forth into the streets of St. Servan to beg scraps of food for the bedridden inmates of a garret which was the real birthplace and cradle of the Congregation for which his Holiness Pius IX. was wont to say that it required a double vocation, so laborious and crucifying to nature is the work. Hence, from the fact of Jeanne's being better known to the public than the real foundress,

Marie Jamet (now *Supérieure-Générale*), and Virginie Trédaniel, her assistant, the Little Sisters of the Poor, even so lately as in the year 1872, were known to many of the inhabitants of St. Servan as "Les Jeanne Jugan," and as such were indicated to the writer of these pages when asking her way to the *Asile* in that year.

About twelve miles from St. Servan the rocky coast which runs from St. Malo to Granville is indented by a wide, flat stretch of sand, which forms a bay and encircles that wonderful memorial of the Middle Ages, the Mont St. Michel, and nearly facing the mount, on the Brittany shore, stands the little fishing village of Cancale. Cancale, small as it is, is known to the world at large by its oysters and by the pencil of Feyen-Perrin, who has immortalized its fine, stalwart lasses with their thickly braided hair, standing in groups waiting for the return of the heavily laden oyster-boats, or else with their heavy woollen skirts kilted to the knee, their feet encased in long fishermen's boots, and their brawny arms bared to the elbow, working away in the muddy "parks," sorting and cleaning the precious shells before the return of the tide.

Here, at Cancale, in a humble cottage of the outskirts, Jeanne Jugan was born in the month of May, 1793; and it would seem as if the Blessed Virgin, in whose month she came into the world, had taken

Jeanne from her birth under her especial patronage, as from her earliest childhood there was a something about Jeanne which distinguished her from the sturdy young Cancalaises, who were as rough of tongue as they were strong of limb; her gentle gravity and quiet modesty of demeanour rendering her a marked contrast to the free-and-easy, laughter-loving bold young folk around her. From her infancy Jeanne was of a tractable, calm disposition, eminently suited for the peaceable occupation in which her earlier years were spent, namely, the care of her father's sheep.

Thus, whilst watching her flock on the grassy cliffs which overhung the bay, she would sit gazing for hours into the changeful skies above her, or looking at the wide expanse of sea, as it now glittered and danced in the sun's rays, now changed from blue to green, and from green to black as the clouds gathered, and the swift currents raced and swirled round the big brown rocks. Now her eyes would rest on the shadowy outline of the wonderful mount, hanging as it were betwixt sea and sky, and growing more distinct as the haze rolled away, and now upon the white sails of the fisher-boats looking like so many score of large-winged sea-birds skimming backwards and forwards between the two coast-lines; and at intervals, according to the devout habit taught her by her mother, the little girl would remember

to ejaculate a prayer for the safety of those other absent toilers of the sea who, at daily peril of their lives, were earning the bread of their wives and children in the ice-bound creeks and gulfs of distant, dangerous Newfoundland.

It is probable that our little Jeanne scarcely comprehended either the beauty or the grave portents of these familiar scenes of sea and sky, but they nevertheless had their effect upon the formation of her character, deepening her insight into God's ways, and filling her heart with sympathy and compassion for her fellow-creatures. When the skies were leaden and the waves ran high under the furious north-western blasts, and the fishing-smacks came hurrying into port, the wives and mothers of the absent Newfoundlanders would come to the edge of the cliffs day after day, watching for belated vessels, and peering anxiously into the murky horizon; and Jeanne would join them, and, kneeling down beside them, would pray with them for the safety of the absent, and grieve with them when the sea took the lives of their nearest and dearest, making herself one with them in their anxiety and their grief. And when, childlike, words failed her in which to express her sympathy, full of faith in the power to console of her Divine Mother, she would lead her flock into the lanes, and there weave garlands of wild flowers and feathery grasses, and hang these round some little wayside shrine, when, kneel-

ing down, she would tell her beads devoutly for the safety of those in peril at sea. Thus, year after year, Jeanne's heart was moulded to sympathy and to trustful prayer.

We are not told much about her first Communion, except that she made it with great fervour at the little parish church of Cancale, at the age, we may conclude, of ten years, in accordance with the custom of the country, and we can readily believe the testimony of her relatives that Jeanne, who had always been so docile and unselfish, became from this date the help and stay of her family, taking upon herself, as far as her strength would permit, the greater part of the household work, and that under her careful management the little farm became a model of order and prosperity.

When Jeanne, now a tall, grave-eyed young girl, had attained the age of eighteen, her modesty, piety, and industrious habits attracted the attention of a young seaman, who, with the full approval of the parents on both sides, sought her in marriage. At first she appeared to look favourably on her suitor, but, for some unexplained reason, declined to engage herself, and, when spring came round, the young fellow was compelled to re-embark without having succeeded in obtaining any definite promise. During his absence a mission was preached at Cancale, which Jeanne attended regularly, and at which we may conclude

that God made known to her that it was His will she should devote her life to His service in a special manner, as no sooner did the young sailor return from his voyage and renew his proposals to Jeanne than she formally declared her intention never to marry.

A few months later we find her at the Hospital of the Rosais, St. Servan, in attendance upon an infirm priest. Why she had left her family and entered domestic service we are left to conjecture—probably it was in order to escape the pressing entreaties of her sailor-lover—whatever were her motives, they met the sanction of her parents. The separation was painful in the extreme, we are told, and many were the tears which tender-hearted Jeanne shed at taking leave of her father, mother, brother, and two sisters. To the latter before starting she made over the greater part of her wardrobe, giving them all the bright-coloured skirts, gay shawls, and handkerchiefs, which in common with other girls of her age she had hitherto cherished, reserving for herself nothing but the plainest of wearing-apparel. Already had the love of poverty made its way into Jeanne's heart, and so simple was she in her dress, that during the first years of her sojourn at St. Servan, when she joined in the processions of *Corpus Christi* and of the Assumption, the other Children of Mary would whisper to each other, "Don't let us walk next that poor Jeanne Jugan; her clothes are not fit to be seen; she makes

one quite ashamed of being seen in her company!" And yet, had those girls looked a little closer at the companion whose simplicity shocked them so much, they might have taken a lesson from her scrupulous neatness and cleanliness, and might also have been not a little startled had an angel whispered in their ear, that of all the Children of Mary following in the procession she upon whom their Divine Mother looked with the greatest favour was precisely the despised Jeanne Jugan!

Jeanne stayed a short time only at the hospital. The Abbé Le Coq died, and she entered the service of his sister, a good woman, who soon discovered the admirable qualities of her young servant, and became devotedly attached to her; Jeanne, on her side, returning her mistress's affection with all the warmth of which her generous heart was capable. Mademoiselle Le Coq lived on the second floor of a house in the Rue du Centre at St. Servan, a street which still bears the palm for rough, uneven paving in a town where huge cobble-stones are thrown together without any regard to size or symmetry under the name of pavement. The rooms were small and the windows narrow. Jeanne, who had been accustomed from her childhood to the freedom of an outdoor life and plenty of exercise, suffered considerably from the want of air and the sedentary existence entailed by constant attendance upon an elderly and somewhat

eccentric invalid, and finally her health became so delicate as to excite the alarm of her mistress. This made matters worse, as the old lady in her over-anxiety nearly succeeded in killing the country-bred girl with unsuitable food and remèdies. Noticing that every time Jeanne ascended the steep staircase leading to her apartment she suffered from violent palpitations, no sooner had the young girl reached the top than the old lady insisted on her drinking a tumblerful of *eau sucrée*, and this sickly decoction was repeated whenever Jeanne showed a symptom of being tired or out of breath, until the complete loss of her appetite ensued. So fearful of draughts for her favourite was the good old soul, that Jeanne's existence was almost entirely spent between two large folding screens, until at last she could hardly bear a breath of fresh air, and when in church would excite many a smile as being the only person in St. Servan who made the Way of the Cross seated, carrying her chair from one station to the other, too weak and exhausted to stand and kneel with the rest. And yet this delicate Jeanne, a few short years hence, was to walk many and many a mile day after day, and month after month, in the teeth of wind and rain, sun and dust, carrying a heavy load on her arm without a thought of health or of self, or of aught but the finding of food and clothing for her poor pensioners at home!

Great latitude was left to Jeanne by her mistress in the matter of her practices of devotion, although gladly would the latter have kept her beloved servant at her side the livelong day. We may say that mistress and maid vied with each other in unselfishness, in considerateness, and in the love of God, Whose goodness and perfections formed the principal theme of their conversation, as they sat sewing together, saying the Rosary in common, or reading good books. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, and those who knew Jeanne were never long in her company without discovering the wealth of Divine love which filled her heart, and found its overflow in an equally boundless love of the poor. Mademoiselle Le Coq was not rich, and her power of giving was limited. Her charities, however, passed through Jeanne's hands, in which they seemed to increase and multiply in a marvellous manner, thanks to the young servant's extreme carefulness and economy, and the many privations which she imposed upon herself for the sake of the sick and needy.

About this time Jeanne's devout life, simple as it was, began to attract the notice of a few observant souls, partly owing to the singular recollectedness of her attitude at daily Mass, partly from the exceeding sweetness of her disposition, which was reflected in every word which fell from her lips, notwithstanding the countrified quaintness of her phraseology.

The expression of her face was even more striking; it seemed to be literally the window through which shone the purity of her soul. As one of her friends said of her one day, "Jeanne really has grown quite pretty" (Jeanne being decidedly plain, rather than the reverse), adding naïvely, "I suppose it is her gentleness and her modesty which so beautifies her." As a matter of fact, her outward appearance differed in no wise to the casual observer from that of any ordinary, quiet, well-behaved young woman of her class. She was, moreover, exceedingly silent and retiring, owing doubtless to her many years of solitary communings with Nature, and it is only from occasional anecdotes cited here and there that we are able to form an idea of the virtues hidden under the simplicity of her exterior. To quote an instance. One day, when a friend of hers, Anne Citré by name, who, desirous of getting a poor child received into an orphanage, had been to solicit help at the house of a rich family, and, instead of help, had met with a mortifying refusal, came to tell her discomfiture to Jeanne, the latter listened silently to the torrent of impetuous words, and then replied gently, "My dear Anne, in all our troubles, in all our joys, whenever we meet with contempt, whatever happens, we must always say, 'Glory be to God! I thank Thee, my God!'" Thus unwittingly giving testimony to her own conduct, for in all the course of her long

life never once was Jeanne heard to utter an impatient word, in spite of all the rebuffs and humiliations, of which she had a full share.

Jeanne Jugan remained with Mademoiselle Le Coq until the death of the latter, tending her devotedly throughout many years of a long and painful illness, her respectful, loving care more that of a daughter than of a servant. Whilst eager to forestall every wish of the dear invalid, Jeanne's paramount thought was for the soul of her mistress; and no sooner did she perceive that the end was approaching, than she prepared the dying woman for death with a gentle frankness, and took care that she should receive the Last Sacraments whilst in full possession of her consciousness; and when, finally, her agony was prolonged beyond all expectation, called all the other inmates round the sick-bed, turn by turn, so that, hour by hour, the prayers for the departing soul should be said without intermission until the breath left the suffering body, and Jeanne tenderly closed the eyes of the kind old mistress, who had been a second mother to her.

After the death of Mademoiselle Le Coq, Jeanne left St. Servan, and took another situation, in which, however, she could not remain; her faithful heart was too full of the mistress whom she had lost, and of the many years of tranquil happiness spent under her roof. So she came back again to the steep little

street, where every stone of its old-fashioned grey houses spoke to her of the past, and here she rented a small room, or, more properly speaking, a garret, in common with a friend, Fanchon Aubert. Her late mistress had bequeathed to her faithful servant a small sum of money (which, with Jeanne's own savings, amounted to six hundred francs, or £24), together with the whole of her furniture. This furniture was plain and homely in the extreme, but rendered the garret habitable; and, in order not to encroach too much on her little fortune, Jeanne lost no time in going out into the town and seeking for work by the day. This she found in the house of Madame Citré, whose daughters, good and devout girls, had long been amongst her best friends. The elder of the two, Anne, kept a grocer's shop, where Jeanne made herself generally useful—washing, sewing, cooking, or taking scallop-shells filled with curds and whey (called *cailles*, and sold three for a halfpenny) out to sell in the little *place* in front of the parish church. To this occupation the feebleness of Jeanne's voice was somewhat a drawback, and many a time, as she cried, "Des cailles, qui veut des cailles?"[1] it dwindled away into such a faint, quavering *falsetto*, that the street urchins would dance round her, mimicking her. "*Aux cailles!*" they would call out. "Come quick, or Jeanne will die before you

[1] "Curds and whey, who will buy?"

get them!" Jeanne's serenity was not in the least ruffled, however. On the contrary, instead of showing annoyance at her little tormentors, she seemed, in her great humility, to enjoy being made their butt, as customers were thereby attracted to her wares.

These were not the only occasions upon which Jeanne had to suffer at the hands of street boys, for in later years, when they used to see her continually passing backwards and forwards in the streets of St. Servan, looking like a long black shadow, so tall, so thin, so straight was she, that they nicknamed her "Jeanne D'unérat," a familiar local expression, signifying "Jeanne All-of-a-piece," and so common became the sobriquet, that one day, at the very outset of her work as *quêteuse*, when the Abbé Le Pailleur was dining with a lady of St. Servan, the daughter of the house said to him—

"Monsieur l'Abbé, we had a visit this morning from Jeanne D'unérat, who came to beg for her poor."

"Ernestine," said the good Abbé, gently, "it is not right of you to say that."

"How not right? Is she not your *aide-de-camp?*"

"Ernestine, it is not kind of you to make fun of Jeanne," repeated the Abbé.

"Gracious goodness! but I am not making fun of her. Is not Mademoiselle D'unérat her real name?" asked the young girl, whilst every one present smiled at the perfect sincerity with which she had spoken.

But we are anticipating, although the time has arrived when coming events began to cast their shadows before them, and Jeanne's life to enter into a new phase or transition stage. Her past, as it now lies behind her, was marked out as it were by so many milestones on the road of sacrifice; firstly, the voluntary giving-up of her young lover; secondly, the leaving of the home of her parents in order to earn her bread amongst strangers; thirdly, the loss of her good mistress and the complete change in her way of living at an age when habits and affections do not easily take fresh root;—Almighty God thus leading her on by detachment after detachment until she should be ripe for that life of complete self-abnegation which was to be her final portion.

CHAPTER II.

AN ATTIC IN THE RUE DU CENTRE.

BEFORE proceeding farther it will be as well to describe St. Servan for the benefit of those of our readers who, whilst perhaps well acquainted by name with Dinard and Paramé as fashionable watering-places, do not know of the existence of the grey, old-fashioned little town hidden away behind the more historical St. Malo, its grass-grown Norman remains bathed by the lovely river Rance, and its narrow dirty streets, with their crowded little port, swept and purified by the fresh sea-breezes brought on the tidal waters of the estuary.

To the eye of a stranger the whole town looks essentially poor, not to say squalid, and he wonders where are the descendants of the famous pirates who were the terror of the Channel in this district, until he observes the many long lines of wall skirting the town on every side, and revealing the presence of comfortable square houses standing in fruitful gardens which slope down to the little bays and creeks of the

fast-flowing river, or else stretch away towards the fields of corn and buckwheat, where in spring-time the golden colza makes a gay carpet for the apple trees planted in straight lines up and down.

Testimony to the faith and devotion of the people may be found in the size and beauty of the parish church, in the completeness of its services, and in the number of its priests; whilst at the same time the poverty and misery, so often inherent to a fishing-population, is equally made patent by the numbers of beggars surrounding the presbytery and church doors—crippled and deformed children, old men and women in every variety of ancient oil-skin and ragged covering, boys on crutches, pinched-looking women with babies in their arms and a black handkerchief tied over their heads telling of early widowhood—all petitioners for bread. Such is St. Servan in the present day. It may, therefore, easily be understood that when the Abbé Le Pailleur (future founder of the Little Sisters of the Poor) was appointed *vicaire* to this parish in the year 1838, he was particularly struck by the immense amount of misery and destitution in a town where there existed but one hospital, and that a small one reserved for the sick only, and no species of shelter for the aged, the infirm, or the incurable poor. The utter abandonment of the aged struck him with especial keenness. It seemed to him that never was there a place with so many indigent

old people gathered together without means of subsistence, and whose moral welfare was in even more grievous and abandoned a plight than were their bodies, whilst the absolute necessity of going to the rescue of these poor creatures in some special manner forced itself imperatively upon his mind.

The Abbé Le Pailleur was twenty-five years of age when appointed to St. Servan. It is related of him that on the day when he arrived to take up his post as sixth *vicaire*, no sooner had he set foot within the precincts of his future parish, in a road leading from Paramé past the hamlet of St. Joseph, bordered by an avenue of trees, than he felt himself suddenly enveloped as it were by a Divine intuition of the work which lay awaiting him, and that, on arriving at St. Servan, he entered the church, fell upon his knees before the tabernacle, and there offered himself afresh to his Divine Master, renewing the promise he had made at the moment when the Divine Will was intimated to him, of submitting himself wholly and unreservedly to all that should be required of him; and that, during this offering of himself, he was given clearly to understand that God demanded of him the creation of a work of charity, of self-devotion, and of prayer which should take its rise in the parish to which he had just been named. The actual form of this work was not then revealed to him, but he distinctly understood that its object was

to be the salvation of souls in the persons of the aged poor.

Night and day the thought of this work to be done weighed upon the soul of the young *vicaire*, whose whole previous life may be said to have been a kind of novitiate in preparation for it in his constant love and service of the poor, it having indeed earned for him the sweet title of "Le petit frère et ami des malheureux."[1] Notwithstanding the great and signal favours which he received from heaven, it required faith and courage nothing short of heroic to even contemplate for an instant the founding of an institution of charity out of the feeble elements at his disposal, himself possessed of neither fortune, influence, nor protection. Many were the hours which the holy young priest spent on his knees in the Chapel of St. Joseph, and long and fervent the prayers said at the foot of the old painted wooden statue of the Saint to whom he turned in all his perplexities, a statue which is now a cherished relic in the house of his daughters at St. Servan, and stands in the middle of their garden, since a worthier representation of the great Patron of the Church has now been put up in its stead.

It would seem that St. Joseph listened graciously to the prayers breathed forth so ardently from this fervent soul, for one day, shortly after the Abbé Le

[1] The little brother and friend of the unfortunate.

Pailleur's arrival at St. Servan, a young girl, Marie Jamet by name, came to his confessional for the first time—why, she could not explain even to herself. Equally unexpectedly the Abbé was made aware at once that here was the first instrument for his future project, whilst she on her side, as she listened to the words of the confessor to whose feet the Holy Ghost had so manifestly led her, felt a wonderful peace and consolation take possession of her heart and soul.

This young girl had long wished to enter the religious life, but her poverty (she being a seamstress by trade) had seemed to be a hindrance. The Abbé bade her be of good courage, and held out hopes that her wishes might shortly be realized, whilst inwardly blessing God for sending him this answer to his prayers. Soon after this a second penitent came to the Abbé's confessional, a friend of the first, Virginie Trédaniel, an orphan, and likewise a humble needle-woman, whose aspirations towards consecrating her life to God and to the service of the poor were identical with those of her friend. These two young friends the Abbé advised to join together in preparing for the future which God should show them, and to sanctify themselves the while by prayer and good works in common, and recommended Virginie, as being lonely and motherless, and barely sixteen years of age, to look upon her friend Marie—who, although

only eighteen herself, was serious and staid beyond her years—in the light of a mother.

Marie Jamet and Virginie Trédaniel!—the names of two obscure little seamstresses, names now held in honour throughout the whole Catholic world, foundation-stones of one of the grandest edifices ever raised to the glory of God; Marie Jamet, now Superior-General ("Good-Mother General," according to the tenderly familiar phraseology of the "Little Family") of the entire Congregation, under the name of Mother Marie Augustine de la Compassion, and Virginie Trédaniel, her first daughter, who as Sister Marie-Thérèse died in the flower of her age in the year 1853.

Both these young girls were natives of St. Servan. Marie resided with her parents at Lambéty, a hamlet in the outskirts, whilst Virginie, who had neither father nor mother alive, lived in an attic in the town itself, a lonely position which made the young girl cling with all the greater love and deference to the friend whom God had sent her in place of the mother she had lost. Sundays were spent together by the two friends, who, after Vespers, would stroll out into the country in search of a quiet corner where they might spend the afternoon undisturbed. Their favourite spot was a little sheltered bay on the shores of the river, where, in a cleft of the rocks, with a lovely view of gorse-covered headlands, sea, and sky

before their eyes, they talked over the events of the past week, examined each other as to how each had kept the short rule of life given them by M. Le Pailleur, frankly acknowledged their faults and shortcomings, and thus began unwittingly to practise that exercise of the religious life called the Spiritual Conference. One passage in this rule of life puzzled them not a little: "We will take special delight," it ran, "in succouring the aged poor, the sick, and the infirm; we will never refuse them our care and tenderness if so be that the opportunity presents itself, for we must take care not to mix ourselves up in that which does not concern us." Weigh the words as they might, they failed to penetrate their meaning, for the Abbé had not as yet specified their vocation and spoke to them sometimes of one Community, sometimes of another, trying their patience and exercising their docility in every imaginable way. And thus for the space of two years.

To this day, at the Mother-House, there may be seen a couple of little statuettes, representing two very young girls, with a bandage across their eyes and their hands tied behind their backs, the explanation given of which is that these little figures represent the first Little Sisters of the Poor, Marie Jamet and Virginie Trédaniel, in the act of promising obedience to the Abbé Le Pailleur; the bandage signifying their blind

and voluntary abandonment of themselves into the hands of Providence, and the bound hands, the complete renunciation of their wills into the hands of their Superior. During these many months the Abbé had watched the workings of the Holy Spirit in these two young souls, had seen how the grace of God had fostered and ripened therein the beautiful virtues of obedience, charity, fortitude, and humility, which were to shine forth so brilliantly in their future lives; and he considered that they were ready to be led a step farther on the road towards their real vocation. He therefore confided a poor blind woman to their care whom he had discovered in a wretched garret, in a condition of the utmost misery and abandonment. Marie and Virginie, it need hardly be said, accepted their charge with joy, and took it in turns to wash and dress the poor old soul, to clean out her room, lead her to Mass on a Sunday, and give her all the little comforts compatible with their slender means.

Having thus tested the practical capabilities of the two friends, the good Abbé felt that the hour had arrived when the vision which had been manifested to him under the trees of the shady avenue as he entered St. Servan two years before must take tangible shape, and that building of which he had been silently and steadily digging the foundations raise itself above ground. Blessing these two frail instruments of his great designs in the Name of

Almighty God, M. Le Pailleur, the "Good-Father," as we may begin to call him, set forth to seek for a suitable locality in which to house the poor blind woman who was to be the first guest in that long line of *petits vieux*, numbered now by thousands, to enjoy the hospitality of the holy Little Family.

Here it is that Jeanne Jugan makes her appearance on the scene.

As we have said before, the Abbé Le Pailleur was without any private fortune, and wishing as he did to keep his projects secret until they could be realized, he was considerably at a loss to know where to turn for the lodging in question. He therefore took into his confidence the Citré family, with whom it will be remembered Jeanne was living. They entered heart and soul into his desires, and, after many fruitless searches, bethought themselves of Jeanne's little apartment in the Rue du Centre, of which she still shared the rent with an old woman called Fanchon Aubert, and where there were two or three small rooms unoccupied. Whilst suggesting this apartment to the Abbé, the Citrés spoke warmly in praise of its owner, Jeanne Jugan, with whom it so happened that M. Le Pailleur had never been brought into contact, and who, on her side, knew the young *vicaire* by sight only, and had never heard either of the blind *protégée* or of the two young girls who took care of the latter.

In order not to excite the curiosity of the neighbours—always on the alert in a small place where the goings and comings of every one are known to the community at large—M. Le Pailleur, instead of meeting Jeanne at her lodging, made an appointment for her to come to his confessional at two o'clock in the afternoon, an hour at which the church was comparatively empty. In this first interview Jeanne, with her natural simplicity and complete absence of self-consciousness, did not, it seems, comprehend the wishes or the projects of the young priest nor wherefore he had sent for her.

Probably the Abbé spoke enigmatically, and probably also he was unwilling to initiate Jeanne, a total stranger to him, into the secrets of his work, as yet in embryo. We shall unfortunately never know the exact words which passed between the ardent young priest and the humble maid-of-all-work. All we know is that on leaving the confessional Jeanne felt singularly impressed and unaccountably disturbed. "Ah!" she said on returning home to her friends the Citrés, "what strange things that young Abbé said to me! I was so astonished! I never could have imagined such wonderful things. I can't get over it."

Who shall say that this emotion, this disturbance of mind, was not the first visible symptom of a vocation which had long lain dormant in Jeanne's

heart and which stirred her soul at the voice of him who was to give it birth? Her friends, in their turn, could not get over her strange agitation—the stranger on the part of a person usually so calm and self-possessed. They assured her in the most positive manner that the whole affair was nothing but the question of letting her apartment, that there was absolutely nothing she need trouble herself about. But it was of no use; Jeanne shook her head and would not be set at rest, whereupon her friends insisted upon her going back again to the young Abbé, that he might reassure her himself. At this second interview the darkness of bewilderment cleared away from Jeanne's mind, and she grasped the fact that a great project was on foot.

"I see perfectly," she said, "that great and important things are going to be accomplished, and that you do not tell me all there is to be told. You are going to found something with those two young work-girls and the poor old blind woman. . . . Well, I have always wished to be a nun, but my age seemed to be a difficulty." (Jeanne was now forty-seven.) "Take me, will you? Let me have a part in your undertaking. You have stirred up all the wishes and longings of my youth, and my old heart has a kind of intuition that there are immense joys for me in the future! I pray you do not refuse to associate me with these good girls; and as for the lodging

which you desire, it is at your service, M. l'Abbé, from this day forth, and you may look upon it as your own. I shall be only too much honoured at receiving the poor blind creature and her two caretakers."

M. Le Pailleur thanked Jeanne, bade her consult her director as to her religious vocation, and then came to an understanding with her about the details indispensable for the reception of the old woman, one of which was the obtaining of the consent of Fanchon Aubert, who shared the apartment with Jeanne and lived in it, and who, being a quiet body, very orderly and methodical, might possibly object to having her privacy invaded. Fanchon, however, had not the heart to refuse Jeanne's pressing entreaties; and indeed the more she heard of the Little Family which sought shelter under her roof the more cordially did her sympathies respond to its requirements, her first impulse being to offer a home there and then to Virginie Trédaniel whilst matters were pending.

At last the happy day arrived when Marie, Virginie, and Jeanne, armed with the good Abbé's blessing, set forth to bring home their blind *protégée*, and so filled were they with holy zeal, that between them they managed to carry the old woman in their arms up the narrow little staircase, a feat to the strength and skill required by which, any one can testify who

has climbed those uneven and exceedingly steep stairs without any burden to carry.

It was on the Feast of St. Theresa, October 15, 1840, that this first beloved pensioner, Anne Chauvin by name, the first *bonne femme*, entered the humble dwelling of the future Little Sisters of the Poor and brought God's blessing with her. Scarcely had she been installed when, with that holy audacity which characterizes true lovers of Jesus Christ, without waiting to count the cost, perceiving that there was still room for another bed, the brave trio fetched another infirm old soul to the little garret lodging—a poor old woman who had long been suffering from an ulcerated leg, and whom they found in a condition of the most abject misery.

So now the two small rooms were quite full, as it seemed. But, no! A girl of the name of Madeleine Bourges expressed an ardent wish to join the three friends, when she fell ill, and being at the point of death, implored all the more earnestly to be allowed to die in the company of God's servants, and to consecrate herself to Him on her death-bed. So room was made for the sick girl, who, instead of death, found life in the blessed attic of the Rue du Centre, a life which she immediately devoted to the service of God, and who is living to this day under the name of Sister Marie Joseph, and is, perhaps, of all the Little Sisters of the Poor, the one who bears the

greatest resemblance to Jeanne Jugan, her first model, for her intrepidity in begging.

And now, for ten months, the life of these five holy women (for we may include Fanchon, who, though not associated by vow, partook, as far as her age would permit, of all the labours and privations of her companions, giving her little all, together with herself, to the service of the poor) flowed on in an even channel, with very little outward change. Jeanne sat at her spinning-wheel or went out washing, when she could find a day's work, bringing back her earnings towards the maintenance of the two old women, her ardent soul kindling day by day more and more to the work which went on before her eyes, as she strove to take a yet greater share of it upon her own shoulders, seeking how small and how humble she could make herself, how she could spare the others by taking the hardest, roughest tasks upon herself, and by what privations she could add to their comfort and well-being. Marie Jamet and Virginie pursued their avocations of seamstress, pausing in their work to attend to their poor old charges, soothing these in moments of pain, and encouraging them by kind words; whilst the holy young *vicaire*, whenever he could spare a moment from his parochial duties, visited the miniature Community, and left it cheered and invigorated by his counsels and teachings.

At the expiration of these ten months, which may

be termed the novitiate of the little Foundation, the good which had been done no longer sufficed these ardent souls. The charity of Christ pressing them, the little council of the garret decided that a larger number of aged poor must be assisted, and that their work must now take a greater development. So their good Father bade his daughters pray earnestly, and then follow the dictates of their hearts ; he, on his side, praying that God's will should be accomplished. At the bottom of the Rue du Centre, in the Rue de la Fontaine, there happened to be a large ground floor vacant ; so Fanchon was persuaded to give up her and Jeanne's little apartment (a sacrifice which cost the good soul many a pang), and it was decided to rent this ground-floor room, which was low, dark, damp, and exceedingly incommodious, having been long used as a *cabaret*.[1] It had, however, the one merit of being spacious, and capable of holding a great many beds ; and proud and happy was the Little Family when, not only were the two original old women housed therein, but a row of twelve beds, each one occupied, greeted the eye.

Our valiant servants of God's poor now had their hands too full of work at home to earn their bread by outdoor labour. There were wounds to dress, their aged charges to be got up and put to bed, clothes to wash and often to change many times in course of

[1] Public-house.

one day, afflicted as the poor old things were with all the ailments and infirmities inherent to old age, aggravated by long habits of filth and neglect. They had to be fed, thought for, waited upon, tended like so many babes, and, above all, instructed in the love and worship of God, Whom too many of them had forgotten since the days of their youth, living as they had in a state of perpetual mendicancy, hanging about the doors of churches which they never entered, and knowing little or nothing of the holy mysteries celebrated within. And now arose the question of providing for the material wants of the increasing household. The *bureau de bienfaisance*[1] continued to allow each inmate the small sum that she had hitherto been in the habit of receiving, together with a little bread, and now and then an article of clothing. This, however, was far from being sufficient, and the Little Family longed to devise a plan by which to increase their modest resources, and put a stop to the practice which those of the old women able to walk made of carrying on their former trade of begging. It is true that the old dames brought home *most* of the coppers they received, but it is equally a fact that some were spent in the indulgence of a glass of spirits—a bad habit which their benefactresses were most anxious to eradicate. Consequently, a great resolution was

[1] Town relief.

taken, and, zealous beyond everything for the spiritual welfare of their charges, these admirable women made up their minds to become mendicants themselves, for the love of Him Who, not finding poverty in heaven, descended upon earth in search of it. The idea of this heroic self-sacrifice came from M. Le Pailleur, but no sooner did he suggest it to his daughters, than it was embraced with joy, and the energetic Jeanne, suiting the action to the word, laid hold of a large basket which stood handy, and, accompanied by Marie Jamet, started forth, presenting herself at the doors of the houses where her poor had been in the habit of receiving assistance, accepting thankfully the pieces of broken bread or the *liards*[1] which were offered her.

And thus was instituted the first *quête*[2]—the humiliating, toilsome practice which was to become an inexhaustible source of revenue to the Order, and an equally fertile source of spiritual progress to the Little Sisters themselves, who, humble in their origin, humble in their beginnings, humble in their work, have perpetuated their humility for fifty years, by the task, so repugnant to nature, of begging from door to door, and not once a year, not once a month, but daily and hourly, far and near, mile after mile, in

[1] A copper coin, representing rather less than a farthing, now disused.

[2] Daily quest.

foul weather as in fair, by hill and dale, by land and even by sea; as how often, when in the neighbourhood of a naval station, have not the Little Sisters overcome their timidity, and embarked in a little open boat in order to reach the great ironclads, where they are sure of a generous reception from both officers and men!

Jeanne had now her daily work cut out for her, and after the first experiment went alone on her rounds. Gradually the sight of her tall form with her large basket on her arm, and her humble request as she arrived at the different houses, "For my poor, if you please!" began to awaken the inhabitants of St. Servan to an interest in the little household in the Rue de la Fontaine, which was composed of such incongruous members. Visitors now began to call at the door of the low basement, out of curiosity at first, and then came again with gifts and promises of help.

One of these visitors—a little girl at the time—speaks thus of her visit: "One morning, as I was returning from Mass with my godmother, she said to me, 'My child, I am going to take you to see the Jeanne Jugans.' I was always proud and happy to accompany my good godmother on her charitable errands, so we went together a little way down the Rue de la Fontaine till we came to a ground-floor apartment, where we went in. It was a large room with very few chairs in it, but numbers and numbers

of beds which were pushed quite close together, and I could just squeeze in and sit upon a stool between two of these, which were covered with quilts made out of pieces of every sort and kind of stuff and colour, feeling very shy and awkward all the time.

"Irma, my godmother, had been greeted on entering by two modest-looking young women with bright, pleasant faces, with whom she held an animated conversation; these were Mesdemoiselles Jamet and Trédaniel, the pious foundresses of this little kingdom, who, whilst doing the honours to my godmother, no doubt discovered her to be a soul capable of sympathizing with them, as they initiated her into many of the little secrets of their beautiful work. I saw, or at any rate noticed, Jeanne Jugan for the first time that day. She smiled pleasantly at us as we entered, and made a little curtsy. That was all, for she then began to get ready to go out on her daily *quête*, put on her cloak, straightened her cap, and took upon her arm the big basket so well known to the whole town. She seemed to me then old, very old. The old women called her Sister Jeanne. 'Sister Jeanne,' they said, 'work well in our place, beg well for us, and don't forget our commissions, our snuff, and our coppers.' Jeanne leant over towards each one and received a few more confidences in an undertone, smiling benignly all the time. I think she kissed one or two of the old women, probably those who were

blind, and then she went out quickly with that alacrity with which she did everything whilst never seeming to be in a hurry. I noticed how scrupulously clean and neat was the big, rather dark room, and how well everything was arranged."

And now gifts of all kinds poured into the little dwelling—furniture, clothing, provisions, etc. Only linen was much wanted. The Sisters, therefore, betook themselves to prayer as usual, and then had recourse to an ingenious device. On the Feast of the Assumption, when almost every house in the town hangs out some kind of decoration in honour of Our Blessed Lady, they made a little altar, on which they placed a statue of the Mother of God, in the doorway of their big room. A kind gendarme of the vicinity undertook to paint this, and then in guise of drapery the Sisters spread over it all the linen their poor pensioners possessed—five or six shifts, not one single sheet! The whole town being in movement on this festival, many and many were the inquiries as to the reason of this extraordinary altar-decoration; and so touched were the passers-by at such extreme destitution, that it was not long before a goodly pile of linen found its way to the Rue de la Fontaine, poor servants even who had nothing else to give taking off their peasants' jewellery and hanging it round the neck of the Infant Jesus in Mary's arms, until the poor old women were abundantly supplied with clothing of all sorts, and had

no longer any idea, as far as their personal wants were concerned, of the daily toil and privations which it cost their good Sisters to provide for their maintenance. The work was unceasing and heavy; the clothes given were not often new and required much mending; the *quêtes* did not always suffice for the appetites of so many; other things beside food and raiment were indispensable and could only be obtained at the cost of much privation to the Sisters themselves and of increasing labour. Not a moment was given to recreation; every hour brought its round of duties, and all the while the bright and ardent zeal with which these devoted women had begun their task of love, never failed nor flagged as they set the first great example of that spirit of never-varying gaiety of heart which has ever so especially characterized the Little Sister of the Poor.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE IN A BASEMENT.

EIGHTEEN months had now elapsed since the reception of the first *bonne vieille* and still the four friends remained alone at their task. No new vocation was forthcoming, and public opinion still hesitated about giving its full approval and sympathy to the novel and so exceedingly humble undertaking. Although the Curé of St. Servan was favourable to it, there was yet considerable opposition, and from the most unexpected quarters; such absolute poverty and simplicity scandalized many, even amongst the most charitable and devout in the town, so true it is that the leading of a good Christian life by no means excludes the spirit of pride. "What new-fangled absurdity is this?" was asked. "Are we going to be plagued with continual begging?" "Whoever heard of thinking it necessary to take beggars into their own house and feeding them when one has not the wherewithal?" "Above all, whoever heard of making up a Community out of a few ignorant little seamstresses?

Who was going to teach them the religious life? Who was to undertake their spiritual wants whilst they ministered to the bodies of their old women? Surely they ought to have been well grounded in the religious life in some Community or other before setting themselves up together to start something new?" All this and a great deal more was urged upon M. Le Pailleur, whose own youth and inexperience was also made cause of complaint and remonstrance, and who, whilst gladly acquiescing in the fact of his own weakness, would answer in his quiet, gentle manner that God did not always judge according to the views of men, that he felt himself called to found an Institution of a novel nature, and that for a new work new workers were required.

On another hand the relatives of the young foundresses, much annoyed by hearing all this talk and criticism, added their quota of blame and rebuke, visiting their dissatisfaction upon the poor girls themselves as being the primary causes of it. Marie Jamet especially had much to suffer at the hands of her parents in the way of recrimination and hard words; neither was she spared the latter by her younger sister Eulalie (now Assistant-General of the Congregation), who, when meeting her in the street with a basket on her arm, would exclaim angrily, "Go on, go on quickly! Don't speak to me! Don't look my

way! I am ashamed of you carrying that great, ugly basket of yours!"

Jeanne Jugan, too, was not without her share of family criticism, though, in her case, it was less openly expressed, the only relations of hers who ever came to see her being some nieces, the daughters of one of her sisters, and these had always shown their aunt the greatest respect and tenderness. At the outset of the work these young girls came over from Cancale one day to pay a visit to their aunt, and see for themselves what was the meaning of all the gossiping tales which had reached their ears. On entering Jeanne's room they professed to be much surprised at the sight of the old women located therein, and asked why their aunt had made a collection of antiquities in her room, the one who relates the circumstance adding, that never, so long as she lives, shall she forget the severe look and short dry tone, so unlike the usual manner of her aunt, with which Jeanne replied, "These old women have no homes of their own, so I lodge them," making this evasive answer out of unwillingness to betray the secret of the holy little association, but making it in a tone which gave her nieces to understand that there lay a mystery behind her reserve, and that it was useless for them either to ask questions or to express disapproval.

Meanwhile Jeanne had not been long in earning

the esteem and confidence of the Abbé Le Pailleur, who could not resist the ardent entreaties of this straightforward, honest soul, eager to be received amongst the number of his daughters in Christ, and to devote herself with them to procuring the glory of God in the service of His poor. From the moment of her acceptance she had made gigantic strides in the path which had long been the object of her heart's desire, tasting to the uttermost the sweetness of a life crucifying to human nature, but filled with joy and freedom to the soul. The depth of her happiness showed itself daily more and more in the expression of her countenance, the plain features of which were lit up and softened by the bright serenity within. The religious life which she now practised was no sudden experiment; it was simply the refining and spiritualizing of her lifelong predilection for the virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience, together with a practical and regulated method of ministering to the poor. With every day that dawned she therefore appeared to find greater facility in fulfilling the duties of her vocation, and was a living exemplification of the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"[1] by her simplicity of heart, and her complete detachment from earthly things. Thus she was always cheerful, always smiling, always of the same equable humour. Her

[1] St. Matt. v. 6.

health, which had been so feeble formerly, was now completely restored; no walk was too long for her, no burden too heavy, no amount of stairs to climb too fatiguing; to her appetite, once so delicate, no kind of nourishment now came amiss, and her daily food consisted, as did that of her companions, in the broken victuals which she gathered together in her rounds from door to door—unless it were, as often happened, that Jeanne would pick out for herself the coarsest and least tempting of the morsels.

When she was congratulated upon her good looks, and asked how she had regained her health and strength, she would smile and say that the bread of alms contained a wonderful recipe for health and vigour which those alone know who taste of it—a wonderful recipe, indeed, which required a very special grace from God to enjoy as Jeanne did, when we remember the life of ease and comfort which she had led for so many years, and which, at almost fifty years of age, she exchanged for one of continual mortification of the body by early rising (at half-past four o'clock, winter and summer alike), coarse and often insufficient food, and unceasing labour of the roughest kind, and mortification of the soul by humiliations countless as the sands of the sea-shore.

Amongst the last named may be counted a kind

of circle of ridicule and opprobrium which formed itself round the devoted Sisters, who at this period had to drink to the very dregs of their cup of mendicity. They were pointed at, made game of, pelted and insulted whenever they appeared in the streets. Their old playmates and schoolfellows, their companions of catechism-class and workroom scarcely dared be seen speaking with them, whilst those persons even who were attracted by their example, admired their devoted lives, and felt drawn to follow in their footsteps, were instinctively withheld by fear of the public scandal such a vocation would excite. One of these, afterwards Superior of a House in Paris, felt strongly impelled to join the Little Family in the Rue de la Fontaine, but was deterred and disheartened by seeing the abjection in which the Sisters were plunged, and was overheard one day at her prayers murmuring the words, "No, my God, it is not possible! Thou canst not ask that of me!" Another young woman, afterwards Sister Félicité, who died in the Congregation, consumed with the love of God and His poor, at the House at Angers, used to kneel frequently before the altar of St. Joseph in the parish church, and beg of him to further her vocation to a religious life, invariably adding naïvely, "but not, oh! not with the Little Sisters of the Poor!"

Another difficulty against which the Sisters had to

struggle was the discontent and impatience of control of their old pensioners. To this day, when the Homes for the Aged are large and commodious establishments, perfectly organized in every detail for the comfort and welfare, moral and physical, of their inmates, we are often pained by the ingratitude of the latter, by their incessant complaints of their food, of their clothing, of their having fixed hours for rising and for going to bed, of, above all, their lack of the liberty to beg, gossip, and, alas! drink at their own sweet will;—poor, infirm, old creatures, who forget that when they were urgently clamouring for admission into the Home against which they now carp they were outcasts of humanity, without home, without friends, without bed often, covered with sores and filth, and daily acquainted with the pangs of hunger and thirst! It can, therefore, be easily imagined how much the good Sisters had to fight against in the beginning with these poor old souls, whom an inveterate habit of begging had rendered shifty and suspicious. In accepting the hospitality offered them, they had had more than an inkling that they would needs give up many a pet vice, and have to change many a deeply rooted habit, and countless were the tender devices to which the Sisters had to resort, the patient entreaties, the prayers, and often the concessions necessary to keep their rebellious guests within bounds.

As has been said before, upon Jeanne now devolved

the work of the daily *quête*[1] (her age and aptitude rendering her more suitable for the laborious work, M. Le Pailleur considered, than her young companions), one of the functions of which was to collect the weekly or monthly donations in snuff or coppers which had been formerly made to the old women in person. Words cannot describe the amount of patience which the fulfilment of this task entailed upon her, the old crones invariably imagining that she brought them back less than they would have begged themselves, or that something had been forgotten. Before she started of a morning, with her large cotton umbrella in her hand and big basket over her arm, she was positively assailed by the old things. "Sister Jeanne," one would cry, "to-day is Monday, don't forget my halfpenny at such and such a shop;" and another, "Sister Jeanne, whatever you do, be sure you go to the tobacconist's and bring me the quantity of snuff I am entitled to;" whilst another, pulling hold of her cloak, would whisper to her, "Couldn't you bring me a little drop, just a little wee drop, of spirits, just for once in a way?"—that terrible drop of spirits for which there was, and is, scarcely a beggar in Brittany who would not sooner sleep on the bare stones in the open street, or under a dripping hedge, suffering every

[1] No English word exactly corresponds to that of *quête*, which means the begging from door to door, so we must fain keep it in the original.

torment of hunger and swarming vermin, rather than forego!

Jeanne did her utmost to please all as best she might. Being fortunate enough to possess an excellent memory, she rarely forgot a commission or an address, and by a wonderful faculty of putting out small sums to the greatest profit, and of finding little dainties for these aged babies of hers, coupled with tender pacifying words, she generally managed to please and satisfy the most exacting, and to spread peace and happiness around her when she returned to the big room of an evening, bearing her well-filled basket on her arm.

The good Abbé Le Pailleur, understanding thoroughly as he did the nature and dispositions of these ex-vagrants, allowed many little innocent traffickings to take place in order to soften their hardened old hearts. "Let us bear patiently with the defects of our old people," he would often say to his daughters; "our patience will touch them, we shall gain their confidence little by little. Their habits are deeply rooted, their hearts are hard; we must be very prudent how we try to correct them. It won't do to preach to them except by a few kind, gentle words; what we must do is to pray very fervently for them, and then we may be sure that God will come to our aid."

It may interest our readers to know something about these first old women. One of the earliest to be

received was named Margot, and was tall, stout, and dirty in the extreme. A beggar by trade, she had hesitated a long while whether she should accept the hospitality offered her declining years, and finally, in preparation for her admission, had made herself a large bustle, in which she concealed what little money she possessed. Now, it was a rule then, as it is now, that every poor person on arrival should be well washed in a bath of tepid water, the quantity of vermin with which he or she is invariably covered rendering this precaution a measure of the most absolute necessity. When Margot found this out she barricaded herself behind some chairs, and the Sisters exhausted every argument in vain to induce her to let herself be washed. "Never, never," screamed she, "have I been into a bath of *boiling* water!" Standing thus in her petticoat, tall and muscular, an angry terror written on her countenance, she looked a formidable object enough, especially when, seizing hold of a broom, she declared to the Sisters that she knew how to get rid of her vermin without their assistance, and as she brushed her body from head to foot, an army of highly unpleasant parasites began to drop on every side of her. For a moment the Sisters, taken unawares, shrank aside before the sudden shower, but promptly returning to the charge, they succeeded in pacifying Margot by assuring her that her little treasure should be returned

to her untouched. Whilst they were speaking, however, she, thinking to steal a march upon them, deftly hid away thirty francs in her chignon; but when she found that her head would be washed as well as her body, another even more terrible scene ensued, so that for years to come Margot's first bath was a thing to be remembered!

Another of the old women, by name La Mathias, had been discovered by the Abbé Le Pailleur in a state of the most abject misery, lying ill in a garret to which a rickety ladder and trap-door were the only means of access, and up which the young *vicaire* had found extreme difficulty in conveying the Holy Viaticum when the poor creature was thought to be dying. As soon as the new little Foundation had been made, M. le Pailleur bethought himself of this forlorn old woman, and offered to receive her. She accepted, but on the condition that a cat which she cherished should accompany her, a clause to which the Sisters were compelled to assent. Shortly after her reception she fell very ill again, and Jeanne, who was her special confidant, suggested her receiving the Last Sacraments, when she made every sort and kind of excuse—that she was not dying, that she had often got well before when as ill as now, that, in fact, she had rather not! Finally, after much fruitless persuasion, seeing that the danger grew imminent, Jeanne spoke with authority, not fearing to strike salutary

terror into the heart of the dying woman, who yielded at last, saying, "Well, then, if I must, I must, my dear Jeanne. Go and fetch the priest, and put your good God (the crucifix) on the table; but first of all, go and fetch me Minette and her kittens who are down in the cellar, and put them under my blanket, or else I won't make my confession!" And so it had to be done to please the poor old thing, God no doubt compassionating this last little weakness, together with those of her past life, and La Mathias shortly afterwards made a good and happy death.

There was also an old blind woman amongst the earliest to be received in the Rue de la Fontaine, whose violent, exacting, discontented, and, above all, greedy disposition made her a daily cross to the good Sisters. Although her eyes were sightless, her fingers seemed to be possessed of a second sense, as she felt and handled each mouthful of food which she was given, measuring and weighing it, and putting herself into a fury when she imagined her portion to be scantier than those of her companions; the same with her drink, dipping her finger to the bottom of her mug before touching it with her lips, so as to see whether she had her full *quantum* of cider. Often and often the kind Sisters went without their own food in order to increase the portions of their old people, but when, in spite of all their goodwill, the cups and platters of the latter were less well-filled than

usual from want of means, this wicked old blind creature would burst forth into a storm of invective and foul language, which frequently culminated in her throwing her tin mug at the head of the nearest Sister.

Many of the old souls would sell their shifts, and even the sheets belonging to the Community, on the sly. Happily the Sisters had a friend in the woman to whom they took these—a dealer in secondhand articles—who would receive the things and put off their payment to another day, in the mean time sending word to the Sisters, who lost no time in fetching back their goods. Madame Citré, Jeanne's old friend, was of great use to them in unmasking the tricks of these old hussies, who would take her into their confidence, thinking from the plainness of her dress that she was a poor woman like themselves. "Tell me," she said one day to an old crone who had been pouring out her griefs at no longer being allowed to go out begging, "how did you manage to excite so much compassion?" "Ah, my dear," was the reply, "if you want to succeed in begging, I'll tell you what to do; you must drag yourself along the street as if in great pain, and keep coughing and spitting all the time. You must cough, cough, cough—a cough is better than any words!"

As may easily be imagined, it was not from the Sisters themselves that such details as these were gathered; on the contrary, their discretion and in-

dulgence of these tiresome old folks was unbounded, and the severest sentences which ever fell from their lips to outsiders was, "So-and-so has not been quite nice to-day," all the while stroking the withered old cheek so as to mitigate, as it were, the admission that So-and-so could ever be anything but "nice." No; the truth leaked out now and then before strangers, who would arrive in the middle of a scene such as above described, and thus became initiated into the trials and difficulties which the Sisters met with at the hands of these poor creatures to whom they devoted their lives. As, for instance, a young woman, who was in the habit of helping the Sisters with their work from time to time, related later: "One day I arrived as evening was closing in. Jeanne and her companions were in the act of sitting down to their supper; the expression is too grand—seated on their heels upon the floor, they were sharing a crust of bread and a lump of heavy pastry. They had scarcely put a morsel into their mouths when one of their old women exclaimed querulously, 'I am still hungry; I want some more bread.' In a moment the Sisters collected the pieces they were just putting into their own mouths, the poor young girls depriving themselves of their supper to feed the old woman, who, it was discovered a few days later, hid the extra pieces of bread under her mattress, and sold them for a halfpenny as food for pigs!"

By this time there was no more familiar figure to the whole of St. Servan than Jeanne Jugan, and as it was always she who solicited alms for the little Community, to her were very naturally attributed the honours of the foundation—the more so as it was well known that it was her apartment which gave shelter to the first old woman. Her age itself seemed to constitute her naturally the protectress of the young girls living with her. M. Le Pailleur allowed this mistake to subsist uncontradicted, out of a spirit of humility with regard to his spiritual daughters as well as to himself, for now that the tide of disapproval had turned, his Little Family were as much the objects of praise and admiration as they had formerly been of disdain and contempt. No language was good enough to extol the devotion of such young girls for their repulsive old charges, and compliments and congratulations were now as profuse as had been criticisms, a sudden change which the prudent Abbé felt might have become a snare to the lowliness of these young souls, as yet so new to the path of hidden sanctity, whilst for Jeanne he had no such fear. She had arrived at a maturity when a crown of laurels might have been placed about her pale forehead, furrowed and lined as it was with the weight of years and of much labour, without her even perceiving that it was there. She knew how to hear praise without heeding it, and would often smile politely at a compliment

which she never understood, flattering words conveying no meaning to her simple-hearted nature, being utterly unconscious that there was anything extraordinary in her rare gift of speech, in the irresistibly winning manner in which she asked a favour, and in the many sterling virtues which her daily life brought into public notice. She, no doubt, had received as her "watchword" to let people say and think that she was the keystone of the little edifice, and thus in her unquestioning obedience and tranquillity of soul to stand, as it were, as a barrier and shield between the dangerous honours of the world and the youth and inexperience of her companions—a beautiful part to play indeed, and one worthy of Jeanne's great soul; to accept compliments which she longed to transmit to others, and not do so; to listen to praises which were not her due, and to keep silence; to obey implicitly and at the same time so easily and so naturally, that the pious subterfuge was never suspected.

Another circumstance which fell in with M. Le Pailleur's views was that, doubtless by a Divine dispensation, it was the custom in St. Servan to look upon Jeanne as somewhat wanting in intellect—almost half-witted in fact. Her beautiful simplicity was so perfect that it was taken for folly by many. Good and holy though she was known to be, her very appearance lent itself to this idea, wearing as she did a cap differing from those either of the Servannaises or Canca-

laises, its flapping wings terminating in front, and hanging in two points over her face, and contemporaries of hers in St. Servan still speak of her as *une si drôle de bonne femme, une si drôle de pauvre bonne femme!*[1] Truly had Jeanne passed through her time of probation long before her young companions. Her character may be said to have been formed and formed again in the novitiate of her past life. Had she not served the Master in Whose house she now dwelt from her youth? Had she not learned the secrets of His love and tasted the sweets of holy poverty in the many little devices by which she deprived herself so as to find means of assisting those poorer than herself when living with Mademoiselle Le Coq? Had she not served that kind but eccentric old mistress with a faithful submissiveness which nothing but death had altered? Had not her youth, from its earliest years, been remarkable to every one for its modesty, its purity, and its piety? And had not all these habits of hers, framed and fashioned by the love of Him Who was her first and constant Teacher, led her naturally, step by step, to the final entering of the religious life?

[1] Such a funny old woman.

CHAPTER IV.

JEANNE AND HER QUÊTES.

JEANNE JUGAN was certainly a living example of the words, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land."[1] The crowning characteristic of her nature was meekness. She was, to the end of her days, positively childlike in her extreme simplicity; the depth of her humility was unfathomable, and her gentle frankness won all hearts, whilst no one could do otherwise than admire and marvel at her astounding energy and perfect detachment of spirit. Wherever she went she conquered. Great was sometimes her holy boldness, but her naïveté charmed away many an apparently insurmountable obstacle. Sometimes she would be turned into ridicule, as formerly by the St. Servan street boys, for her simplicity; she seemed so credulous that it was an amusement often for the thoughtless to play upon her credulity. Being so perfectly honest and straightforward herself, the idea of duplicity on the part of another never came into

[1] St. Matt. v. 4.

her head, and she would smile serenely at the most cutting epigram or the most nonsensical remark, her peace of mind in no wise disturbed; but putting her silly interlocutors to shame by her sweetness. On one such occasion, touched by the gentle dignity of this humble servant of the poor, they ended by saying, "Here, Jeanne, we have teased you unmercifully, but here are five francs for your poor;" upon which Jeanne replied, "Thank you kindly, my good gentlemen. Tease me as often as you like at that price. See, here! Suppose you give me a bit more of your malice with a bit more of your silver!" thus gaily and wittily turning the tables upon the young men, and proving that she was not quite so simple as they had imagined.

Entering a business office one day, Jeanne was roughly repulsed by the occupant, and told to go away in no measured terms. Looking up from his desk a few moments later, this person found her still standing waiting patiently, which provoked a torrent of abuse, and he called her every name under the sun. "Thank you, Monsieur," replied Jeanne, when the angry words had ceased. "You are quite right. I am all that you say; but now, what are you going to give me for my poor?" Such humility and such an answer so disarmed and melted the anger of the irascible man, that not only did he give Jeanne a good round sum of money that day, but he became

thenceforth a constant benefactor to the Little Family, and a good practising Christian into the bargain.[1]

Rich and poor alike loved Jeanne. The very servants, often so jealous of any holy mendicant whom they fear will deprive them of their perquisites, received her with a welcoming smile, and, once having admitted her within the house, left her to find her way to kitchen, dining or bedroom as she liked best. She had free entrance everywhere, making her appearance at the most unexpectedly early hours, and, with her basket on her arm, tapping gently at the doors, waiting silently in the passages if she feared to have chosen an inconvenient moment; but never going away until she had attained her object, and seen the person whom she came to seek.

In the same discreet, persuasive manner she made her appearance in every public office, standing quietly without speaking, in a corner, until the banker, for

[1] It is related of Jeanne, that when at Brest, a few years later, she went to beg at some office or another, and the occupant, tired of seeing her waiting patiently on when he had already bidden her begone, got up and gave her a slap in the face, exclaiming, "That will teach you to come bothering me!" Whereupon, as on the occasion quoted above, the holy *quêteuse* replied, with a smiling countenance, "That was well done, Monsieur! That slap was for me; now something for my poor, if you please?" holding out her hand. Need we say how quickly contrition had overtaken Jeanne's aggressor for so unchivalrous an action, and how eagerly he made reparation by the generosity of his donation!

instance, should have got through the pile of financial papers in front of him, or completed the addition of a long line of figures, when, lifting his eyes, he would perceive the familiar, tall black figure.

"Well, what are you doing there, Jeanne?"

"I am waiting, my good sir."

"Is that all, Jeanne?"

"Not quite. I have come begging for my old women."

"Your old women! Why ever did you go and burden yourself with them? Do you want to pass them on to me by chance?"

"No, sir. We will share them between us for to-day, if you please. You shall feed them, and I will take care of them. Be generous to me, and I will promise you not to come here again for ever so long." Then putting all her heart into her voice, "I will pray for you, my dear Monsieur," she added; "*they* will pray for you, their benefactor; I will teach them how to be grateful."

And the worthy banker could not fail to respond to so much confidence, coupled with such humble discretion; and many a bank-note thus found its way into the capacious pocket of the humble *quêteuse*.

It seemed as if Jeanne's faith and trust in Providence had the power of working miracles, so wonderfully did money and resources multiply in her hands. She had the *gift* of begging. Nothing daunted her,

nothing intimidated her, and she knew how to accept a refusal in a manner which often obtained for her the very thing which had previously been refused.

"When I was a child," relates an inhabitant of St. Servan, "that which struck me most in Jeanne Jugan when she came to my father's house was her gratitude, her manner of expressing her thanks, and the serenity of her countenance no matter whether she was given anything or not. 'Jeanne,' I said to her sometimes, 'mamma has sent me to tell you there is nothing for you to-day—no scraps, nothing in fact.' 'Very well, then, Mademoiselle,' she would answer, 'thank you all the same. It will be for another time. Thank your mamma for me, for I know she would have liked to fill my basket if she could.' Jeanne never forgot to make a sort of little curtsy as she went away, and departed as gaily as if she had received a fortune."

And now, as the number of old people increased, the resources became insufficient for the maintenance of so large a family, and Jeanne began to think of extending the circle of her begging expeditions. St. Servan was, as it has remained up to the present, a poor place, burdened with a large and needy population, many charitable institutions to support, and very few large fortunes to which to apply. Indeed, it is greatly owing to the thrifty habits of the people, to their utilizing of every remnant of food,

and turning into money of every rag and scrap, that the resources of the Little Sisters of the Poor are so much smaller in Brittany generally than in other parts of the world; it was probably this very frugal manner of living, this turning to profit of everything which is usually the property of the dust-heap, which gave the good Abbé Le Pailleur the idea of an institution supported by alms and by the acceptance of gifts which to the general observer would be deemed worthless, but which, under skilful treatment, were convertible into the food and raiment of his beloved poor.

With the Abbé's leave, therefore, Jeanne began to extend the circuit of her daily rounds, and to profit by the various circumstances which attracted strangers to the neighbourhood. She commenced by her native place Cancale, where the annual regatta brought together a considerable concourse of people from far and near. The difficulty was how to get there, Cancale being twelve miles distant from St. Servan, and the prices of a public vehicle on these festive days far beyond Jeanne's humble purse. She confided her dilemma to Mademoiselle Anne Citré (her resource in many an emergency), who, as usual, came to the rescue, offering to accompany her and proposing that they should make the journey in a certain milkman's cart of her acquaintance, with whom she made a bargain on her own behalf

with the clause that her friend should be conveyed gratuitously.

The emotion of Jeaune may easily be imagined at returning to the scene of her childhood after a long lapse of years, not to speak of the excitement of making, as it were, a new venture in the begging line. There had been no such thing as a regatta in the days of Jeanne's youth, and she hardly recognized the little port when she reached the pier, which was now crowded with sightseers, and beheld the rocks and the cliffs, along which she had so often led her flock, covered with people until there was hardly standing or sitting room. Flags were flying, a band playing; pleasure-boats, great and small, heavily freighted, gliding up and down; whilst the beautiful bay, on whose sometimes smiling, sometimes angry waters, she had so often gazed, was graced with a flotilla of sailing vessels of every size and tonnage drawn up in line and waiting for the signal to be fired from the gunboat in attendance before commencing their graceful evolutions.

Here and there Jeanne noticed a familiar face; but, valiant though she was, her stout heart beat not a little when the moment came for her to begin her *quête*. Holding her big bag in one hand and feeling for the crucifix which hung at the end of her rosary with the other, after one timid glance

towards the crowd, she went bravely forward. Without so much as a shade upon her calm face to indicate the struggle within, she went from group to group, fearlessly accosting the fine ladies, who turned astonished looks as their smart dresses were gently pushed aside to make room for the humble gown of coarse serge and hooded peasant's cloak, and the young dandies who, field-glass in hand, were studying the scene before their eyes and making bets upon the various boats. What she said, in what terms she made her request, we know not; but on every countenance surprise gave way as she spoke to a moved expression of admiration. Her words were simple, of that we may be quite sure, but of a simplicity which went straight to the heart, and soon the black bag could hardly contain the five-franc pieces, the silver and the gold which were dropped into it by every hand; and when the last cannon-shot was fired, Jeanne's joy knew no bounds as she rejoined her friend, Anne Citré, with her treasure.[1]

[1] The Little Sisters of the St. Servan House have kept up the custom, started by their first valiant *quêteuse*, of begging for their dear poor at every regatta, race-meeting, and public gathering of the kind, and many of our readers have no doubt frequently seen the modest-looking couple of black-cloaked, black-hooded Little Sisters threading their way in and out of the carriages and people on the St. Malo and Dinard race-courses, their humble request on their lips, "For our poor old people, if you please," without giving a thought to the effort

The milkman meanwhile was growing impatient to return to St. Servan, and, having partaken too freely of the day's merry-making, and his eye catching sight of Jeanne's well-filled bag as she clambered into the cart, he insisted noisily upon having his share of the booty. Eventually, however, he was pacified, and contented himself with reclaiming the price of Jeanne's conveyance, as well as that of Mademoiselle Citré, both of which he doubled, as well as his charges of the morning. Finally, the two friends arrived at St. Servan after this momentous first day of begging in the country.

Mademoiselle Citré took great delight in often accompanying Jeanne on her distant expeditions, and from her lips many interesting details have been gathered, one of which was the history of a baby-pig which was offered Jeanne in lieu of money, and which was more of an encumbrance than a benefit, as the friends had far to walk across the fields and evening was drawing in. Jeanne, therefore, decided to put the pig into the famous black bag. Presently there issued thence such lamentable sounds that it was evident the pig was anything but comfortable. Opening the bag, he was found, indeed, in a sorry plight, his ears pendant, and a choking sound issuing

it costs these humble heroines of charity to face such a crowd. We are happy to say, however, that the receipts are generally such as to reward them for the painfulness of their errand.

from his throat; whereupon Jeanne carried him home all the way in her arms as if he had been a sick child, stopping every now and again to listen if he were still alive, and finally, on reaching St. Servan, administering a cordial, which revived him sufficiently to allow of his forming later on a very agreeable meal to all the Community of the Rue de la Fontaine, besides an ample provision of sausage-meat, when a few months' careful treatment had enabled him to recover the disastrous effects of the journey in the black bag, causing Jeanne to exclaim in her naïve way, "See how good God is! He took care to cure the poor thing, to fatten it, and bring it to a good end!"

Soon there was not a regatta nor a race-meeting for miles round where Jeanne's tall, straight figure might not be seen imploring the charity of the public, making her way through every obstacle, awakening interest in her work, touching the hearts of all, until her coming could be perceived from a distance by the opening and closing of the ranks of spectators, as she and her inseparable bag passed through them. Some would give to her out of admiration of her courage; others out of pure charity; others out of pity for the aged, whose cause she pleaded; others out of selfish motives, the hopes of bringing good luck to the horses on which they had laid their money. No matter to Jeanne! All motives were good when they filled her hands, and we may

hope that even indirect almsgiving, when made in so noble a cause, brings with it some direct good to the giver.

The farthest point which she reached in her peregrinations was the Channel Islands. Here, again, the eloquent simplicity of her words, and yet more the touching example which she herself gave in leaving home and crossing the sea to plead for her aged charges, melted every heart. When she returned to St. Servan her black bag was not half large enough to contain the heterogeneous offerings she had received, and her arms were laden with bundles containing cutlery of every description—needles, razors, scissors, knives old and new, etc. Nothing came amiss to her, a worn-out razor, a rusty knife, an empty bottle, a crust of cheese, an old shoe, a ragged garment. She accepted everything that was offered (knowing that everything would be turned to profit in some way or another) with the grateful smile and curtsy and sweetly expressed thanks which made her so welcome wherever she bent her steps.

Sometimes in her rounds Jeanne would find a treasure of a different nature, some poor, infirm, old soul, starving and neglected, whom her warm heart longed to take home with her to the Little Family of the Rue de la Fontaine. But how could this be done? Impossible to squeeze in another bed! In vain she besought the other Sisters to find a means of housing

such and such a homeless creature. Impossible! One poor soul, an old sailor aged seventy-two, crippled with articular rheumatism, and unable to move hand or foot without assistance, had lain for eighteen months upon a handful of fetid straw, his head resting upon a stone, the sole covering to his aching limbs an old sail-cloth, whilst he subsisted entirely upon the bits of food which other poor creatures would throw him in passing. How could Jeanne's tender heart see such misery without longing to relieve it, and take the poor old fellow home? Another time, her compassion, together with that of the whole Community, was aroused at the inhumanity of a girl of loose morals who, tired of having to maintain her mother, who was old and afflicted with a badly ulcerated leg, took the poor creature upon her back, and threw her down in the middle of the Rue de la Fontaine, at the door of the Sisters' residence. Something must be done; a larger place must be found, they all declared, to which M. Le Pailleur cordially agreed, confident that as Providence had assisted them in such a wonderful manner ever since the beginning of their undertaking, they might push their holy audacity yet farther, and be certain that Divine help would never fail them.

We have said above, in describing Jeanne's wonderful *quêtes*, that it would almost seem as if she had had the power of working miracles in her faith and con-

fidence. Need we wonder much if her prayers had perhaps the power of increasing her receipts in a miraculous manner, when such a circumstance has occurred not once, but many and many a time in the history of the Little Sisters who have followed in her blessed steps? Not many years ago, for instance, at a seaport town well known to most of our readers in the north of France, whenever provisions ran short, and there was nothing for dinner, the Little Sisters would put a few scraps of food upon a dish and give this to their Good-Mother (a holy Little Sister who is still living, and whose name, therefore, may not be mentioned), and beg her to help the old people, a hundred and fifty odd in number. This, quite unsuspectingly, she would do, and continued helping and helping, portion after portion, until every plate was well filled with what would have sufficed naturally for two or three persons at most. The same Good-Mother, when a simple Little Sister in the laborious days of foundation, had charge of the *quête* for about twelve years, walking the whole country round for mile upon mile, sometimes sleeping out, sometimes returning home in the *diligence*, after days of arduous toil. On these journeys many were the providential, or, as we may term, miraculous, occurrences which befell the two Sisters; once, for instance, when, as they were returning home, the elder of the two looked into her purse and found that a few

pieces of silver and some coppers were the sole result of their labours. "Oh, how disappointed our Good-Mother will be!" she exclaimed, "for she was in such great need of a little money;" and she counted the receipts over several times with her companion, expressing her regret at returning with so poor a sum. On reaching the house, she renewed her regrets to the Good-Mother, telling her the amount collected, when on opening her purse to take out its contents, what was her joyful amazement to see a louis (a twenty-franc piece) shining in their midst!

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST HOUSE.

It was resolved, therefore, to seek a new home, and that on a larger scale. With childlike trustfulness the Little Family determined to compel Providence, as it were, to come to their aid by becoming proprietors instead of mere lodgers as they had been hitherto. Far from being dismayed at the prospect of the extra labours which a greater number of old people would entail whilst they were still so few in number, they saw therein fresh motives for renewing their confidence in Almighty God, and for extending their beautiful hospitality rather than curtailing it.

It was obviously impossible to remain in the damp, unhealthy basement any longer. The beds almost touched each other; the Sisters themselves slept on the floor or in any corner where a mattress could find room; and, primary reason, it was out of the question to receive any more of their beloved poor. There was a large building in a street leading past the church out towards the country which, in days by-

gone, had been a convent belonging to the Daughters of the Cross, but which during the Revolution had been converted into a dwelling-house divided off into flats, and had remained thus until the year 1842, when it was put up for sale by its owner, Madame Porée de la Touche, at the price of 22,000 francs (£880). On this building, the walls of which were sanctified by many past years of prayer and praise, together with a large piece of ground adjoining, M. Le Pailleur had long set his desires. But how was the purchase to be effected? The good Abbé had nothing except his very small emolument as *vicaire*, £16 a year at the most. Faith he possessed, however, in abundance—that faith which removes mountains. To begin with, he sold every superfluous article of furniture (these were few, it must be owned), Jeanne Jugan gave the remainder of her six hundred francs, and Fanchon Aubert the rest of her worldly possessions, which sums united sufficed for the payment of the legal expenses, whilst the finding of the actual purchase-money was left to Almighty God.

This trust, so characteristic of the Little Family, was very soon justified; scarcely eighteen months had elapsed before, through the generosity of various benefactors, the whole sum was integrally paid.

This House, the first Home for the Aged Poor absolutely belonging to the Little Sisters, remains to this day the Asile des Vieillards in St. Servan, the

hilly street in which it stands bearing the name of the Rue Jeanne Jugan, a name given by the town in grateful recognition of the services rendered by one of its holy inmates. At one end of the kitchen of this Home—a spacious kitchen, adorned with the large range and huge coppers familiar to all the Houses of the Little Sisters—is to be seen a sort of low gallery with a wooden palisade, to which you ascend by a few stairs, and this was the refectory of the first Sisters for many and many a year; a little slip of a room, so narrow that it resembled a passage, and so low that even a small-sized person could not stand upright in it.

Shortly after the removal of the little household from the Rue de la Fontaine, Fanchon Aubert, the good and devoted woman who had shared Jeanne's lodging, and who had since helped the little Foundation by every means in her power, giving up her furniture, her clothes, and lastly the whole of her savings, died in the arms of her dearly beloved Sisters, leaving behind her a memory beautiful in its humble and hidden exercise of charity. Too old to enter the little Community, and too much attached to it to think of a separation, she had remained in the Home, choosing to rank herself amongst the number of the aged pensioners, and rendering what little humble services her failing strength would permit.

A few months after taking possession of their new

quarters the little band of faithful companions had the supreme happiness of making their vows of religion in the hands of their Good-Father, M. Le Pailleur. It was on the Feast of the Presentation, November 21, 1842, that the ceremony took place, without any outward pomp and show, unknown, indeed, to the inhabitants of St. Servan, in the seclusion of an underground room, which is now the cellar beneath the parlour of the actual House, the said parlour having been the temporary chapel of the newly acquired building. Marie Jamet was consecrated to God as Sister Marie-Augustine de la Compassion; Virginie Trédaniel, as Sister Marie-Thérèse; Jeanne Jugan, as Sister Marie de la Croix; and Madeleine Bourges, as Sister Marie-Joseph; whilst the little Congregation collectively received the sweet and lowly title of the Little Sisters of the Poor. From this date the Sisters adopted the habit under which they are so familiar to our eyes, a dress differing slightly only from that of the peasant-women in the country which gave them birth.

For months past M. Le Pailleur had spent many an hour in his quiet little room at the end of the presbytery garden—a room which, for its tiny proportions, its poverty and absence of all comfort, might have been the cell of a religious—drawing up the constitutions of the Congregation which Almighty God had ordered him to found, and which are based upon the Rule of St. Augustine and adapted to the par-

ticular calling of the Little Sisters of the Poor, the vow of hospitality being added to those of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

At the expiration of eighteen months subsequent to the opening of the new Home, our four friends had the joy of seeing themselves surrounded by fifty old people of both sexes. How these four sufficed for the almost superhuman work of feeding, clothing, mending, washing, dressing, and cooking for so many pensioners, besides the labours of the daily *quête*, we can hardly imagine. Well may they have been compared to "four granite pillars supporting an edifice of overwhelming proportions"! Without special assistance from heaven it would certainly have been impossible. Often, indeed, they were ready to drop from exhaustion when, after toiling all day indoors and out-of-doors, the infirm condition of their charges would require them to pass the night in attendance upon the latter. Yet never did they allow their weariness to ruffle their joyousness of heart, never did the brightness of their countenances grow dim; with St. Augustine, whose Rule they followed, they had learnt that "there where love reigns there is no labour, or if labour there is, it is labour of love."

According to their vow of hospitality, the Little Sisters ministered to the wants of their old people first, and then took their own meals, the consequence of which arrangement being, that often their pittance

would be scanty in the extreme. Here again, however, Providence came to the rescue often and again, as for instance, on one particular winter's evening, when the old folks were snugly tucked up in bed after a good supper, and nothing was left for the Little Sisters themselves but a quarter of a pound of bread, each Little Sister as the platter was passed round refusing her share in order to leave more for the others, a peal was suddenly rung at the door-bell. "Who can it be at this late hour?" they asked one another. Who was it, indeed, but Providence, attentive to the need of His faithful children, under the guise of a well-filled basket of provisions sent from the presbytery!

In similar manner, a charitable lady of our acquaintance would often take a delight in "playing at Providence," as she called it, depositing a joint of meat or basket of fish upon the doorstep, and then ringing the bell and hastening away to some distance, whence she could enjoy the Little Sister portress's amazed looks, as she gazed up and down the street, wondering who could have left so timely a gift.

Demands for admission now poured in from every side. The House in the Rue Jeanne Jugan was full to overflowing, and the Little Sisters themselves slept where they could—in garrets or on landings, according to their wont. "We must build, that is certain,"

they said. But how was this to be done? They possessed ground in plenty, that was true, but as for funds—fifty centimes (fivepence) was the extent of their fortune! No matter. The little silver piece was laid at the feet of Our Blessed Lady, and the building was commenced. The Little Sisters set to digging the foundations, handling lime, making mortar, and wheeling sand and stones with the energy with which they went about every other avocation, if with less practical knowledge; seeing which, the workmen of the town, moved to compassion at the spectacle of these devoted women staggering under heavy loads, the perspiration streaming down their faces, offered their services gratuitously. A builder undertook to supply doors, windows, and woodwork generally. Gifts of money flowed in, and the Little Sisters were able to watch the walls rising from the ground whilst pursuing their ordinary habits of life. Together with the enlarging of the House came at last the increase of the Little Family itself. So much charity, so much heroism in the service of the poor produced fresh vocations, and several young girls of the working-classes sought admittance into the little Congregation. Thus the number of *quêteuses* was doubled. A portion of their weighty burden was shifted from the shoulders of the foundresses, and the House began to assume a regular appearance, each Little Sister having her special office.

In the month of November, 1843, some charitable ladies of the town proposed to Père Le Pailleur and to his laborious daughters to make a large-sized "Crib"[1] in the parlour of their House, in order to attract the public, and a little money at the same time, to the new Foundation. Scarcely had the idea been mooted than it was acted upon with delight; the Gouyons, Guiberts, Chatelliers, etc.—all names synonymous with charity in St. Servan—provided the funds for the undertaking; whilst various young ladies dressed the figures, and Messrs. Mentec and Colas undertook the architectural part. A small tariff was charged at the entrance of this wonderful Crib, as it was earnestly desired that a kitchen-range should be procured with the proceeds. Soon visitors flocked to the door, strangers as well as natives, the English especially showing themselves most generous on the occasion, and a sum of from seven to eight hundred francs was raised. About this date, M. Le Pailleur received a legacy of 7000 francs, which also came in most opportunely for covering the expenses of the new building. It was left him by an inhabitant of Jersey, who having heard that a relative of his had fallen into great poverty at St. Servan, went in search of her, and found her at the Home for the Aged, so happy and so admirably tended, that he not only sent

[1] Representation of the cave of Bethlehem, with the Infant Jesus lying in a manger.

offerings of money from time to time to M. Le Pailleur, but bequeathed him the sum above stated at his death.

Another and even more unexpected sum of money was received by Jeanne Jugan soon after this. Heroism such as hers in the service of poor suffering humanity could not long hide its light under a bushel. The Curé, the mayor, and the members of the town council came to the joint conclusion that such devotion deserved to be known and rewarded, and sent up a memorandum backed by various testimonials to the French Academy, whereupon, after mature deliberation and examination, the Committee of the Prize for Virtue (*Prix de Vertu*) proposed to award the sum of 3000 francs to Jeanne Jugan from the Monthyon Foundation (commonly called the Prix Monthyon), a proposal which was ratified by the Academy in the year 1845. The following are the eloquent words by which the report made to the Academy was closed:—"Messieurs, there remains a problem which no doubt is present to the minds of all. How is it possible for Jeanne to provide for the wants of so many poor? Providence is great! Jeanne is indefatigable! Jeanne is eloquent! Jeanne prays! Jeanne weeps! Jeanne works! Jeanne is never seen without a large basket or bag on her arm, which she always brings home filled! Brave-hearted woman! The Academy places in this basket a

sum which she can dispose of. She awards Jeanne a prize of 3000 francs."[1]

Thus for a moment was Jeanne, Jeanne's heroism, and Jeanne's virtue made public theme. The account of her deeds was in every newspaper (in this instance again to her alone was given the whole honour and glory of the new Institution of Charity). Her modest black hood was raised that all might look into the brave, cheerful, time-worn face, and read her story; but Jeanne herself knew nothing of it all. She had never heard of prizes being given for merit, and like a little child who does not distinguish between the prize for reading and that of excellence, she only knew that she had gained a prize which called itself that of Virtue, that it meant six hundred round pieces of silver, each representing a hundred sous, a sum the like of which she had never possessed, nor even dreamt of possessing; but as for the names of French Academy or Monthyon, they conveyed nothing whatever to her simple mind. She had gained a "lucky number" in something or other, she knew not what; she (or her Superiors: what did it matter which—were they not all one and the same?) was going to receive 3000 francs for her poor! And in her joy at thinking of all the good suppers, all the good clothes, all the good things which such fabulous wealth would supply, she went from one friend and benefactor to another

[1] Report of M. Dupin.

to tell the good news, saying, with her sweetest smile, "My kind friends, rejoice with me. I am so happy! I have been lucky enough to gain the prize for Virtue, and I have got 3000 francs for my poor." One of these friends, a gentleman, who was an especial favourite of hers, replied, "That is well, Jeanne; I congratulate you sincerely." And then in order to try her, putting on a most serious countenance, he added, "When one gains the prize for Virtue, one should be decorated accordingly, and so you must wear a knot of ribbon on the top of your cap for the remainder of your life." Jeanne went on her way, adding, however, to the next person to whom she communicated her good news, "And I have to wear a bow of ribbon on my cap all the rest of my life; the good Monsieur X—— told me so. It rather vexes me to have to do that; but there! for my poor I would wear a dozen bows if it were necessary!"

When the young, merry Little Sisters, Marie-Augustine and Marie-Thérèse, heard Jeanne's profession of faith with regard to her decoration, they immediately put her to the proof. Sister Marie-Thérèse, who dearly loved a bit of fun, made a bow of red ribbon and pinned it to Sister Marie de la Croix's cap, greatly to the delight of both Little Sisters and old people; and it was not until several hours had elapsed that they undeceived dear, simple Jeanne, and took from her the bow and the imaginary honour which it had cost her not a little to accept.

The first to break the spell of isolation in which the four foundresses had hitherto remained was a girl who, when she entered the Home, had no thought of remaining in it permanently. She came merely to help the Sisters in a press of work, but when once she had made acquaintance with the peaceful happiness of the little household, with that peace, in fact, which God gives to those who serve Him in singleness of heart, she could not bring herself to leave them, and begged to be admitted into the holy little company. Her entrance was soon followed by that of a friend of hers, who, on going to pay her a visit, was so struck by the brightness and joyousness of the Little Sisters, that she also prayed for admittance into their ranks.[1]

[1] A similar instance of an act of charity towards the Little Sisters being rewarded by the grace of a vocation to their Order, took place in one of their Houses, founded a few years later (Tours). Two young needlewomen, being for the moment out of work, bethought themselves of utilizing their leisure by going to mend the clothes of the Little Sisters. They lived in a country village, and had only heard of the Little Sisters from two *quêteuses*, who, when begging in the locality, had told them about the work. So these good girls set off, walking the fourteen miles which lay between them and their destination. After spending several happy days over their charitable task, they took leave, with not a few tears and many a promise to soon return and visit the Sisters. This promise they faithfully kept, and came back, not to give a few leisure hours to God's service, but to consecrate their whole lives to Him in the company of His devoted servants.

CHAPTER VI.

RENNES—DINAN—TOURS—ANGERS.

Some months after the events related in the last chapter, the numbers of the Little Sisters having notably increased, a wish which had long lain near their hearts began to take shape—that of extending their work of hospitality beyond St. Servan. It was true that the fifty old people in the Rue Jeanne Jugan were supported by little short of a miracle; but, argued the Little Sisters, that which had been done in one place might equally be done in another. St. Servan was not the only town in which there were poor creatures, miserable in mind and body, and their own poverty should not stand in the way of other towns enjoying the benefit of their work of hospitality.

Accordingly the Good-Father bethought himself of Rennes, the city in which he had made his ecclesiastical studies, and of how often he had been afflicted at the sight of the immense amount of men-

dicity there. To Rennes, therefore, he sent Sister Marie-Augustine to begin over again that holy venture which had been so marvellously crowned with success at St. Servan. She started on her journey alone, having for all resources her obedience, undaunted courage, and the profound conviction that she was doing that which Almighty God wished her to do. Her first care was to seek, not money, but some aged poor, whom she then installed temporarily in a small room, scarcely worthy of the name, in one of the suburbs, which suburb was chiefly composed of low public-houses. Here she was shortly afterwards joined by Jeanne Jugan.

The great question now was to find a more suitable locality, and for this it was necessary to work upon the goodwill of the prefect and other authorities, as whilst Sister Marie-Augustine had been alone, the sympathy and help which she received sprang solely from the poorer classes, and from the soldiers who frequented the public-houses near at hand, and saw the work as it grew under their eyes.

Here Jeanne's courage and talents as *quêteuse* proved invaluable. During her first interview with the prefect, in order to interest him in her favour, she naïvely remarked—

"You must know, Monsieur le Préfet, that I have gained the prize for Virtue."

"My good Sister," replied the prefect, who had a

heart of gold, "permit me to congratulate you, and to embrace you on both cheeks!"

Our good, simple Jeanne accepted the congratulations without the embrace, rapidly diverting the attention of Monsieur Henry from herself to her aged charges, and gaining him over, heart and soul, to their cause.

The new House was not founded, however, without great difficulty, and it required all Jeanne's holy boldness to bring the foundation to a successful issue. Taking advantage of her age, when she had sought an interview in vain with certain authorities, she would go to their private residence and make friends with their wives, mothers, or sisters; tell these her troubles and difficulties, and get them to secure her the coveted interview, backed by their own warm recommendation. When the difficulties in her path were really, to all outward appearance, insurmountable, Jeanne was the first to acknowledge the fact.

"Yes, I know, *ma pauvre, petite dame*," she would say; "it is folly, if you like; it seems impossible. But, if God is with us," raising her eyes towards heaven as she spoke—"if God is with us, it will be done!"

"But," was objected, "the authorities refuse absolutely, my poor Jeanne!"

"Could I not see them? Could I not speak to

them?" she urged. "Help me, I entreat of you!"

"Well, in an hour's time Monsieur X—— will be here, and if you have the courage——"

"Oh, my dear, good little lady, courage is not lacking, I can assure you. Only let me wait."

"Very well, Jeanne. Do as you wish."

She would then pull out of her capacious pocket a sort of breviary, covered with a well-worn piece of black stuff, and sit down in the hall to wait, interfering with nobody, and being in nobody's way, entirely absorbed in communing with Him in Whom alone she trusted for obtaining the end she desired. Then, when the hall door opened, and the important personage put in an appearance, the simple-hearted peasant-woman, strong in her childlike faith, would walk straight up to him, and beseech him so sweetly and with such an earnest countenance, that she invariably succeeded where other and more studied eloquence had failed.

One of the causes which rendered all preliminaries touching the Rennes Foundation so arduous was the long silence of the Archbishop,[1] who thought fit to withhold his sanction until he should have seen and studied the work, and until he should have fully tried and proved the zealous, ardent young priest who was desirous of pitching an abiding tent in the heart of

[1] Mgr. Brossais de Saint Marc.

his archiepiscopal city. A memorable day came, however, when, filled with admiration for so much saintliness, humility, and zeal, the venerable prelate took off his own rochet and laid it upon the shoulders of the young founder, thus tacitly rendering him and his work an unqualified tribute of esteem and approval.

When the Little Sisters left the suburb in which they had first taken up their abode, they did so in a touchingly triumphal procession, the soldiers previously mentioned vying with one another as to who should aid in the removal of the little household, and carry not only its humble furniture, but also the aged inmates themselves.

This new House had formerly been a factory, and was situated in a quarter called La Pilletière, at the extreme end of the town, and consisted of a series of roomy tenements, irregularly constructed, standing on a strip of land between the high-road and the river Vilaine. The size of the building and the fact of its situation in the very heart of Brittany decided Père Le Pailleur upon making it the novitiate of his daughters, and as such it remained until the year 1855, when the increasing numbers of the Congregation and the admirable development of the work rendered it too small for a Community of five hundred persons, and another site had to be chosen for the novitiate.

The Institution commenced in the lowly garret at St. Servan may now be compared to a tree of gigantic growth which, as it sent forth fresh and powerful young branches, lost none of its own vigour, but, its roots striking deeper and deeper into the ground, the fruitful sap rose again and again with renewed fertility. Vocations now came fervent and numerous, and the founders were enabled to respond to the pressing calls which reached them from every side.

Dinan, a small town in the diocese of St. Brieuc, about twenty miles from St. Servan, picturesquely seated on the rocky banks of the river Rance, was the next place to which Sister Marie-Augustine turned her steps at the urgent request of the mayor, who, unlike his republican successors of the present day, thought he could not do a better stroke of business for the town which he represented than to endow it with a gratuitous refuge for the aged poor. The Bishop of the diocese and the Curés of both parishes approving, the Little Sisters at once set about finding a dwelling for the old souls who were impatiently waiting. Alas! nothing in the least suitable presented itself but an old tower which had formerly served as a prison, the ground floor of which was crumbling away with the damp and mildew of years, and was, moreover, rendered almost uninhabitable by the fact of the town drains passing beneath it and filling it with an abominable stench. In no wise

dismayed, however, the Little Sisters, finding that one room in this tower was pretty free from bad odours, installed their charges therein, and contented themselves with the reeking unwholesome basement for a sleeping chamber. This latter possessed yet another inconvenience—that of there being no means of closing the door from the inside! The Sisters knew no fear, however; there was not much in their dwelling to tempt a midnight thief, and for months they slept with an open door, against which a chair was pushed by way of fastening. Shortly after the Sisters had taken possession of the old gaol, our indefatigable Jeanne arrived from Rennes, in order to put the *quêtes* upon a good footing, and, thanks to her ceaseless energy, soon had the happiness of contributing to secure a more suitable home for her dear poor.

The present House, on the outskirts of the town, formerly a Franciscan convent, is roomy and commodious, standing in the middle of a large, sunny garden, and contains upwards of a hundred old men and women. The resources of the place, however, before the establishment of a garrison there, were exceedingly small; the inhabitants themselves being many of them so poor that their own means of subsistence consisted often in the gathering up of the broken victuals, coffee-grounds, etc., so precious to the Little Sisters, and selling these for a few pence;

and indeed, had it not been for Providence's coming to the aid of the Community in a marked manner, the Sisters, if not their charges, would often have suffered want in its severest forms.

One day, there being no milk to give the invalids, a Little Sister bethought herself of appealing to the compassion of St. Joseph—the Procurator-General of the Little Family—by making a miniature cow in cardboard, and hanging this round the neck of the Saint's statue. A few evenings after she had so done, a ring came at the gate-bell at about half-past eight o'clock, which, owing to the lateness of the hour, the Sister-portress answered by opening a crack only, and on her inquiring who was there, "An old woman," a masculine voice replied, "who craves immediate admittance." "Impossible!" rejoined the Sister; "we have not a bed or a corner which is not full!" The nocturnal visitor (it was winter and pitch dark), however, insisted so urgently that the worthy portress went to fetch the Good-Mother, who, recognizing the voice of one of her principal benefactors, said, "Well, if the case be really so pressing, some sort of a shake-down must be managed for the night," opened the gate wide, and in walked a fine milch cow driven by Monsieur X——.

To this day the Dinan House is the poorest but one in the whole of France. The sacristy and chapel are especially poverty-stricken, and any charitable

lady wishing to employ her leisure hours profitably might there find abundant work for her fingers. Until a cope was sent from England a few years ago solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament could never be given, to the great distress of the old pensioners.

Shortly after the opening of the new Home a lady from the environs went to Dinan, impelled by a great desire to see that Jeanne Jugan of whom she had heard so much, and great was her satisfaction when one day Sister Marie de la Croix came, in course of her rounds, to beg at the very house where she was staying. "You may think how quickly I ran downstairs," said this lady in relating the circumstance, "when I heard she was there!" "Well, and what then?" asked her interlocutor. "Ah, then," continued Mademoiselle de Gouyon, "I *saw* a person who, at first sight, looked very commonplace, but I *heard* a religious who possessed the most extraordinary gift of eloquence you can imagine, as she pleaded the cause of her poor—a gift which I could never have dreamt of if I had judged of her only by her personal appearance! . . . But then," continued this lady, after a moment's pause, "she has been at a good school with M. Le Pailleur. An uncle of mine, M. de la Baronnais, used to be simply lost in admiration of that little Abbé, and nothing would have induced him to miss his New Year's sermon—a

plain, practical one if you like. When going into an analysis of it he both amused and edified us: 'When you arrange your linen-cupboards, Mesdames,' had said the Abbé, 'and count over the sheets, and press them down in order that you may stow away more in each shelf, does it never strike you that many poor people have not even a bit of old linen for dressing their wounds, have not even a single sheet, nor a blanket even? Ah, for pity's sake, take out the share of the poor, by making a little more room in your cupboards! . . . When you are at table, and when, after the soup is helped, you are handed first one hot, steaming dish and then another, will you not give a thought to those poor, hungry creatures who are craving for a crust of bread or for the scraps of your copious meal?' 'Finally,' said my uncle, 'this dear good Abbé made the inventory of a house better than any auctioneer could have done, and put so much charity into their heads (his daughters' and his own), that for the life of them they couldn't open a cupboard or eat their dinner without thinking of the many Lazaruses at the Home, and without examining their consciences as to whether they might not be the "rich man" of the Scriptures.'"

The thousand and one privations and trials incidental to all these new Foundations served to prove more and more clearly to Père Le Pailleur the strength and durability of the spirit which animated

his daughters, and it was his great consolation to find that the fuller became their ranks, the closer grew their union, the more absolute their docility, their self-abnegation, their sisterly love, and, above all, their childlike gaiety of heart and countenance—the reflection of their interior peace and contentment. These distinctive features which stood forth so markedly in the first Little Sisters of the Poor have never varied throughout the vast army which has followed in their footsteps. From Good-Mother to the humblest Sister, at whatever post, in whatever part of the globe you may meet them, you will note the same cheeriness of face and manner (as if, as has been somewhere remarked, to be always smiling was a part of their Constitutions), the same gratitude for the smallest help, the same friendly cordiality, the same absolute uniformity of spirit—in fine, a uniformity so rarely to be found in any Order, and which is probably due to the fact of their holy founder, Père le Pailleur, and their Good-Mother General, Marie-Augustine, having been spared to them for so many blessed years for the formation and example of their children.

The next Foundation to be made was that of Tours. Another step forwards is now taken by the valiant Little Family, and it is many miles from their native Brittany that their venerable founder sends forth his daughters to make new conquests—conquests of hearts, in the charity and generosity of the public,

and conquests of souls, in the persons of the indigent poor—victories which, alas! were paid for at a great price, the life of Sister Félicité (the young girl who had so naïvely entreated St. Joseph to further her entry into religion anywhere except with the Little Sisters of the Poor), who died two years later in consequence of the great fatigue she had undergone.

Mademoiselle de la Valette, an inhabitant of Tours, much given to good works, came one summer to St. Servan for the bathing season, and seeing the newly established Home of the Little Sisters, and hearing the wonderful details of their earlier days, was seized by a great desire to secure the benefit of a similar institution for her native town. How to bring this about she knew not, being extremely shy and diffident and her income small! However, she prayed fervently and then consulted a great friend of hers on the subject, M. Dupont, so well known as the "holy man of Tours," who encouraged her to persevere in her design, and immediately set about making inquiries at Tours as to ways and means. At first the very idea was scouted and Mademoiselle de la Valette's anecdotes of St. Servan laughed at as the romances of an over-enthusiastic soul. The moment also for proposing a new work was not exactly propitious, the inundations of the preceding year having destroyed the crops and spread famine and disease throughout the town, whilst there were peti-

tions on all sides begging for the starving population. The mayor, who was personally acquainted with M. Dupont, did not absolutely refuse his consent. The Archbishop, however, compelled to be cautious in the face of so much misery, hesitated about welcoming a new venture, which had for its credentials a poverty so extreme; and, on the other hand, feared lest he might be opposing God's will were he to deprive his town of the good work. He therefore temporized, saying that he would entertain the proposition if means could be assured for carrying it out.

This was sufficient for our holy plotters, and in all haste the Little Sisters were bidden to set forth. The money for their travelling expenses was forwarded by M. Dupont, and a few days later Good-Mother Marie-Augustine, with Sisters Félicité, Marie-Louise, and Marie-Thérèse, set foot on the platform of the Tours railway-station at four o'clock in the morning, on December 30, 1847. When they descended from the train they had not a single centime left in their purse. Nothing dismayed, they asked the way to M. Dupont's house, and had not taken many steps along the street when they met the holy man himself hurrying to meet them, who immediately proposed the little party's going to hear Mass and so sanctify the first hours of their arrival, a proposal to which they at once assented, though the poor Little Sisters

might well indeed have urged the fatigue and hunger inseparable from a long, cold, and tedious railway journey. After Mass, M. Dupont conducted them to his own house, where he gave them hospitality until the Feast of the Epiphany.

The morning after the arrival of the Sisters, Mademoiselle de la Valette went (rather in trembling, we imagine) to the Archbishop's palace, to announce the fact to his lordship, and great was the surprise of the latter when he found the interpretation which had been put upon his words and how promptly these had been acted upon. Indeed, he flatly told the good lady that she had completely misunderstood him. Poor Mademoiselle de la Valette, dismayed beyond description, made answer that as it was she who had made the mistake, she would take it upon herself to send the Sisters back whence they had come at once, as they on their side could never contemplate beginning their work against the wishes of the Archbishop. Rising from her chair, she was about to take her leave, when the prelate, seeing that very disastrous results might ensue from his caution, decided that as the step was taken, the matter should take its course, and bade Mademoiselle de la Valette bring the Little Sisters to see him, at the same time charging one of his priests to assist the latter by every means in his power.

It may be added that it was not long before

Mgr. Morlot became one of the Little Sisters' most devoted benefactors, and started the precedent, followed to this day by every Archbishop of Tours, namely, that of attending the family festivities which the good Sisters give their old pensioners in honour of certain solemnities—St. Joseph's Feast, the Good-Mother General's birthday, etc.—and serving the old men and women at table, his episcopal purple protected by a large white apron, as he carves the joints or pours out the wine which his Vicar-General and other priests, aided by many friends, hand round to the old souls, whom such an honour as being served by an Archbishop transports with delight, giving additional flavour to the rare good things laid on their plates, all alike furnished by the kindness of benefactors; the one sending a leg of mutton, another a chicken, another a basketful of cakes, another a dozen bottles of wine, another fruit, and so on till the *fête* is complete.

But the days of such joyful entertainment were not at hand yet, and many a month of pinching hunger and heavy labour had to be passed before then by the Little Sisters, who, for the space of five months, were only three in number (Mère Marie-Augustine leaving them in due course when the Foundation had been fairly started). Notwithstanding all difficulties, however, they succeeded in sheltering and maintaining twelve old women in a little lodging which M. Dupont

had found for them on their arrival, and afterwards this number increased to eighteen, when they moved into an equally small but more convenient house. Was it wonderful, therefore, if healths broke down under the almost herculean daily tasks? Every new Foundation is more or less matter for heroism of the quiet, unobtrusive nature practised so silently and so steadily by the Little Sisters, and consequently they who love to go out and meet the Cross of Him Whom they serve, in every form, delight in being chosen to "go on a foundation;" it gives them a chance of tasting privation in a shape with which they might not otherwise meet.

At Tours, for a long while, they had only two mattresses between them, which by putting together they made into a bed for three persons, and for this bed they possessed only one sheet. A fresh old woman arrives, bringing her bed with her, but no sheets, so the Good-Mother says to her two daughters, "My children, we will cut our own sheet in half, and give one half to this poor woman whom God sends us, and we will manage as best we may." No sooner said than done. The two Little Sisters hold up the sheet and already the scissors are beginning to snip, when a knock is heard at the door; one of the Sisters opens it, and a young man enters carrying a large parcel. This parcel contains six pairs of sheets, on seeing which Good-Mother and Little

Sisters all fall upon their knees thanking Providence for coming so miraculously to their aid.[1]

There was also a wonderful stock-pot in the first little lodging, given amongst the odds and ends of furniture and kitchen-utensils on the arrival of the Little Sisters. It was very small, scarcely big enough to hold soup for the three Sisters and their twelve old women. The little household moved its quarters,

[1] Another very similar instance of the manner in which the Little Sisters consult the comfort of their old charges before their own happened some years after the occurrence above cited. The Bishop of Coutances was travelling in the South of France, and happened to visit one of the Houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Counting the beds, it struck him that these were fewer by three than the occupants of the Home. Having a shrewd idea of what this meant, he turned to the Sister who was taking him round, and asked, "Do you receive old people into your House when you have no beds to give them in this severe winter season?" "No, indeed, Monseigneur. Every old person has a bed." "And the three Little Sisters, how about them?" "One sleeps in a stable on some straw, which makes a nice soft bed; another in the day-room of the old women—she also is quite comfortable; and I sleep in the kitchen, which is always nice and warm." This touching episode related by the good prelate to a large concourse of people, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, produced many a tear of emotion, and when a collection was subsequently made on behalf of the Little Sisters, the large sum gathered was due rather to the anecdote related and the warmth of the Bishop's own love of the good Sisters and their admirable work, than to the distinction of the noble ladies who tendered their hand.

and still the little stock-pot fulfilled its daily task; twenty—thirty portions were ladled out of it, and still there was plenty of soup left! It was truly the widow's cruise.

The "holy man of Tours," who was accustomed to see God's hand in everything and to trace the manifestations of His love for His creatures in even apparently insignificant events, could not contain his joyful wonderment at the providential success of the undertaking which had been deemed so hazardous, or his admiration of the Little Sisters themselves. One day, as he was walking along the streets, being asked by a priest whom he met what good news caused his face to beam so brightly, he replied, raising both arms towards heaven as he spoke, "Would you have believed it? The richest, the greatest men on this earth have to give large wages in order to be served, and are often very badly served too, and here now we see the lousy pauper, the half-naked beggar covered with sores and filth, served as God Himself might be served! And by whom? By the Sisters of God—by the Little Sisters of the Poor!"

M. Dupont's esteem for the Little Sisters was no sterile admiration. Never have they had a more faithful or more energetic friend; he worked for them with his own hands, brought them all the fruit and vegetables which his garden produced, pleaded

their cause in high places, filled up many a corner when the daily budget was at fault, and constantly visited their establishment, the pockets of his long great-coat stuffed out with the *bonbons*, cakes, and other little dainties with which they were loaded for his friends—the Little Sisters' old people. Out of the depths of these pockets he would even sometimes produce a bottle of old Martinique rum, which he would pour out and hand round himself, on such an occasion, for instance, as the end of a retreat, when he would commemorate the event by a little treat to these old children whom he loved. On one of these little family *fêtes*, he noticed a poor blind man, a new-comer who had formerly been beset by terrible temptations to despair, even to the length of wishing to commit suicide, and to whom the retreat had brought peace. After the old man had received his God in Holy Communion, his face wore a singularly happy expression. Seeing his lips move, M. Dupont went up silently behind him and was deeply edified at hearing the poor old fellow murmuring in an undertone, "Oh, my blessed Lord! It is true, then, it is quite true that Thou didst come to me Thyself, Thine own Self this morning!" the joy of his heart, which had been for so many years bound up as it were in a casing of stone, now bursting forth through his lips. And then it became a question which was the most overjoyed, the old blind man

who had recovered the faith of his youth, or the saintly benefactor who knew not how to praise God sufficiently for the change wrought in one of His creatures!

Before the Good-Mother, Marie-Augustine, left Tours, she had the satisfaction of seeing her daughters installed in a building better suited to their requirements and to the size of the town, a fairly large tenement, capable of holding a hundred and fifty old men and women, with a large garden attached, situated in the parish of Notre-Dame de la Riche. It is true that the price was 80,000 francs, but there was always Providence to depend upon! And so, the Little Sisters, encouraged by several handsome donations, made the purchase, on condition of paying off their debt by yearly instalments—a heavy tax on the little Foundation just struggling into life, but which nevertheless bore fruit, as whilst the number of old people received by the Sisters increased, so did that of vocations to the Congregation, postulants offering themselves at Tours itself, to the great consolation and happiness of those first Little Sisters who had so bravely borne the burden and heat of the day.

When Good-Mother Marie-Augustine quitted Tours for other duties—her own health seriously impaired by her sojourn there—it must have been with a sad heart that she bade farewell to the devoted trio she left behind, and saw how pale, thin, and worn they

had become in consequence of all the trials and privations of this laborious Foundation. Nor were the days of affliction yet at an end. In 1853 an outbreak of typhoid nearly decimated the town, and seventy-five of the old people were stricken with it, not one of whom, however, died. A year later came a visitation of cholera, when again the Asile des Vieillards was attacked, and in the course of a few days a postulant and nineteen of the aged inmates died, whilst ten Little Sisters were down at once with the fell disease. So much anxiety and fatigue broke down the health of Sister Marie-Thérèse completely, and she who had nursed and tended so many, had to be nursed and tended in her turn, incapable of helping her Sisters by aught save prayer and suffering. Sister Marie-Louise equally grew old before her time, and was afflicted by so many bodily ailments and infirmities that it was a wonder to see her still at her post; whilst gentle Sister Félicité, whom her Superiors sent to Angers, hoping the change might benefit her shattered health, was the first to lay down her life in the list of Little Sisters of the Poor who have since succumbed to their labours—a list sadly long and fast-filling, for it is the exception when a Little Sister lives to grow old. It is not so much the bodily exertions of their lives which bring them to an early grave, as the constant breathing of the vitiated air so pernicious to the lungs, produced

by an agglomeration of old people and the peculiar odour arising thence, despite all airing and ventilation, of a night, especially when the Sisters are on duty in the infirmaries, whilst those who have the care of the kitchen department, whether from the heat of the fire or the continual hauling and lifting of huge coppers, are almost invariably attacked by heart-complaint or internal trouble.[1]

After Tours, Houses were founded at Nantes, at Paris (in the Rue St. Jacques), and at Besançon;[2] but the next town in which we find our friend Jeanne Jugan assisting in its commencement was Angers, the eighth in order, where she passed several months, and where to this day her memory is held in the greatest veneration by the inhabitants, who, like the Servannais, associate her in a special manner with the origin of the Little Sisters, invariably speaking of the latter as "Les Jeanne Jugan."

[1] A new invention has been made of late years, in the shape of a crane or pulley, by which the coppers are lifted off and on the range, without exertion to the Little Sisters, and by which they are thankful to profit when funds are forthcoming for the additional outlay.

[2] The House at Besançon presented one singularity over any other, which was the being able to receive two hundred old pensioners at the very outset, thanks to the liberality of a rich Jew, M. Viel-Perrin. Cardinal Mathieu was instrumental in bringing about this Foundation, which was especially needed in a town where the immorality and absence of all religious principle equalled the poverty and physical misery of the lower classes.

The Sisters were brought to this town in 1850, by the Curé of the principal parish, who installed them in an ancient chapel, long fallen into disuse, which was both small and inappropriate to their purpose, consisting of one room only, across which the Sisters had to put up a paper partition in order to separate their own sleeping-chamber from that of the old women. When one of the latter died, the Little Sisters, so that the other old people should not be affected by the sight of the corpse, carried the body into their own half of the room, where they laid it out, and watched by it all night. It was behind this poor paper partition that holy Little Sister Félicité breathed forth her pure soul into God's hands, and received the benefit of all the *Paters* and *Aves*, which it had been the custom of the Little Sisters to say daily, together with their aged pensioners, ever since the foundation of the Little Family, for the first amongst their number who should depart this life.

In this most unsuitable dwelling they remained until public interest was awakened on behalf of their work, and they were enabled to remove into a more commodious habitation.

Not long after this move, their House was miraculously preserved from destruction as follows :—A fire broke out in a manufactory of lucifer-matches next door to them, and the wind, blowing in their direction, covered the roof of the Home with sparks and other

inflammable matter, whilst every moment the flames burst forth with greater fury. Great was the terror of the old people, and not without cause! Moved by a sudden impulse, the Little Sister-Assistant walked up to the hedge which separated the two properties, and, holding up in her hand a picture of Our Blessed Lady, she promised to raise a statue to the Divine Mother in this spot if the wind changed. At that instant the wind dropped, the flames slackened, and all danger to the Home was averted, in commemoration of which providential escape a little chapel has been erected in thanksgiving to Mary, Mother of God.

For a long time the want of a stronger means of transport for the products of the *quête* than the arms of the Little Sisters had been felt. Jeanne, no longer young, bent under the weight of her heavy basket, and began to find that her strength was failing; it was with a slow, tired step that she now brought home her precious burdens, never complaining, however. She might be feeble and exhausted in body, but her stout heart never flagged. "Was it not the life of her poor that she carried upon her arm?" At Angers, where the market gifts were especially plentiful, this want of some sort of a conveyance was felt more keenly day by day; Jeanne's famous basket and bag were rarely capacious enough to carry home all the fish, eggs, cabbages, carrots, and other vege-

tables which the kind-hearted market-women put by for the Little Sisters.

It was, however, several years after Jeanne had left before the little Community could boast of the much-coveted cart. When out walking in the town one day, the Good-Mother said to her assistant, who was with her, "If we wait to have the money in hand for our cart, never will a cart be seen at the Home! *Allons! à la grâce de Dieu!*"[1] and going there and then into a coach-builder's yard, she gave the order to have a cart built. On the following morning, a lady, a total stranger to the Little Sisters, came to the House, and asking for the Superior, put a roll of notes into the Good-Mother's hand, saying, "Here is to pay for your cart!" The sum was three hundred francs.

It need hardly be said that the vehicle first in use in the Little Sisters' establishments was not the black covered van drawn by a horse, now so familiar to our streets, but a modest little spring-cart, in the shafts of which plodded the humble ass. Indeed, in many places, even this lowly conveyance was beyond their means, and they contented themselves with the donkey alone, across whose back hung a pair of panniers, whilst his meek forehead was adorned with a brass label on which was written the name of his proprietors. Nowadays a "Little Sisters' donkey" seems as much part and parcel of their Houses as the old inmates

[1] "Well, then, by the grace of God!"

themselves, and though their four-footed friend works hard, as do his mistresses, he is well tended; and we well remember, when visiting one of their largest Houses some years ago, being taken by the Sister *quêteuse* to see her "treasure," a wise-looking grey donkey with coat as sleek and trim as that of a horse, and hearing this Little Sister amicably teased by her Good-Mother for getting up half an hour earlier than was necessary every morning (namely, at half-past three instead of four o'clock) in order to rub down and currycomb her donkey. "Well, Madame," said this Little Sister, "have we not a right to be fond of donkeys when our Lord Jesus Christ chose one to ride upon Himself, and has marked it for ever with the sign of His Cross? For my part, I think every one ought to *love* donkeys!"

Poor, long-suffering donkeys! What an amount of ill-usage they would be spared if every one could be brought to take this devout view of their deserts!

CHAPTER VII.

LA TOUR ST. JOSEPH.

VERY aged, very feeble had now become our dear Jeanne Jugan, an affection of the heart having developed itself, rendering it impossible for her any longer to climb stairs or carry her traditional basket, however keen and bright was still her mind, however eager was she to spend her last breath in the service of the poor. So the Good-Father General decided that this faithful old servant should end her days in a well-earned repose, and should still serve the Little Family by the example of her holiness, her obedience, her humility, and her patience as long as God should spare her, dwelling at the novitiate, and teaching the young novices by word of mouth the secrets of her wondrous *quêtes*.

By this time the House at Rennes had been found far too small for the rapidly increasing Little Family, and, by the advice of Mgr. de Saint-Marc, the Superiors had purchased a considerable territory on the confines of the diocese, in the parish of St. Pern,

near Becherel, consisting of an old manor-house, with adjacent farm-buildings, surrounded by woods, meadows, and a great extent of arable-land. "Here is the very spot for us," exclaimed Père Le Pailleur, on visiting the property with the Good-Mother General. "This is the place where God wishes us to be!" The definite purchase was made in January, 1856. The price was 212,000 francs, or £8480, of which sum the Superiors had only 18,000 francs in hand. Whilst considering ways and means, however, Divine Providence came to their assistance, sending them a young ecclesiastic, who offered himself, his services, and the exercise of his ministry to the Good-Father and the Little Sisters, and put the whole of his fortune at their disposal. This money served to complete the purchase of the land, to pay for the building of the novitiate as it now stands—a lordly and imposing pile, with its church in the centre, the white steeple of which, crowned with a large statue of St. Joseph, patron Saint of the Congregation, may be seen from all the country round—and also to materially aid in the English, Scotch, and Irish Foundations.

This young ecclesiastic was the first of an unbroken chain of priests who, giving their services to the Congregation, have the Tour St. Joseph for their head-quarters. M. Ernest Lelièvre belonged to the diocese of Cambrai, and came from a rich and influential family, and was himself remarkable for the

precious qualities he possessed both of heart and intellect. Called by his birth, fortune, and talents to a brilliant position in the world, or indeed in the Church had he so wished, he gave up everything to put himself unreservedly into the hands of Père Le Pailleur, and, under the humble name of Père Ernest Marie, to devote his life to instructing the poor old souls harboured by the Little Sisters, and helping the latter to the utmost in his power.

On the 25th of July in the same year, the Archbishop of Rennes inaugurated and gave his solemn benediction to the newly acquired House of Novitiate, and, assisted by a great number of his clergy, presided over a ceremony of clothing and profession which took place in a large clearing in the midst of a pine-wood.

The House, of course, had to be used as it stood for some time whilst the new buildings were in course of construction, and the raising of a chapel had to be forcedly postponed from want of funds. The Good-Father, however, marked out the ground where it was to stand, and placed a small statue of St. Joseph in the centre.

St. Joseph, as all those acquainted with the Little Sisters must have remarked, bears an important part in their annals. All their worldly as well as spiritual affairs are confided to him, great and small alike. He is their Father, so "he must know the wants of his

children," say they, and he is, they know, all-powerful with his Divine Son. If, however, the Saint is too long in responding to their pressing solicitations, he is put in penance, turned with his face to the wall, hidden away in a cupboard, or "punished" in some way or another.[1] On this occasion St. Joseph lent a ready

[1] In one of the Flemish Houses the old people had had no butter for several days, which fact was enough to provoke a small revolution, for to want butter in the Netherlands is considered almost as bad as to want bread, and many and loud were the complaints of the old people, who at last got quite angry with St. Joseph, to whom they prayed daily, and whom they accused of being indifferent to their needs. The Good-Mother herself, accustomed to see St. Joseph listen graciously to the prayers of the House in every perplexity, did not know what to think, when a bright idea struck her. She bade two of the old men take the statue of the Saint out of the chapel, and deposit it in the cellar amongst the empty butter-vessels. "He'll see we don't lie, at any rate!" quoth the old men as they placed the statue on the ground, whilst the Good-Mother lit a candle on either side of it, promising St. Joseph to restore him to his dignity in the chapel when he should have granted their petitions, and not before. Meanwhile the old people came turn by turn to pray to their Saint in this his new niche, not one of them doubting that a miracle would be worked, some even going so far as to lift the lids and peep into the pots to see whether the butter had arrived! Alas! nothing. The prayers went on, but the supplicators went sad and butterless to bed that night, to begin again next morning. Now it so happened that, on waking that morning, a worthy tradesman of the town said to himself, "How is it that I have never yet been to see the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor? I have been dreaming about them all night." Dressing quickly, he soon

ear to the desires of his devout clients. A lady and gentleman, fast friends of the Little Sisters and their constant benefactors, Monsieur and Madame Féburier, came that very day to visit the new property, and inquired why St. Joseph was deposited thus in the middle of a field? On hearing the reason, they stood aside and consulted together for a few minutes, and

afterwards rang at the door-bell of the Home for the Aged. The Good-Mother answered it in person. "I don't know what you will think, Madame, of my coming here so early," said the good man; "but I have been pursued all night with thoughts of your House—why I cannot imagine. May I be allowed to visit it?" "Certainly, Monsieur, with the greatest pleasure." And the Good-Mother took her unknown visitor through chapel, dormitories, day-rooms, kitchen, etc., etc., and finally descended a few steps, and without a word ushered him into the cellar. The first thing which met his astonished gaze was the statue, the lighted candles, and the old men praying. "Whatever is the meaning of all this?" he asked. "Monsieur, our poor old friends have had no butter for four days, so they have put St. Joseph in punishment down here, in hopes that he will work a miracle, and fill all those pots there before you." The visitor laughed heartily. "And has he done so?" "No, Monsieur; but he will. He never has refused us anything yet!" "I like that! You shall not be cheated. I understand now why I dreamt about you all last night, and why I came here this morning. Fill all those pots with butter, and I will pay." "Ah, Monsieur, be sure that all our *bons petits vieux* will pray hard for you in return!" "I hope indeed they will; and I promise on my side to honour St. Joseph more than I have done hitherto," replied the worthy tradesman. And so St. Joseph was reinstated on his pedestal in the chapel, and the old men's prayers were changed into acts of thanksgiving.

then told the Good-Father that they undertook to fulfil St. Joseph's commission. The plans were drawn out, operations set in hand at once, and a large, solidly built, devotional church was raised to the glorious patron of the Order ("Notre Pourvoyeur," as Père Le Pailleur was wont to call him) in the midst of the novitiate buildings, and the spire at the end of the nave crowned with his statue, whence the Mother-House has taken its name of the Tour St. Joseph.

A word must be said in passing of this excellent couple, Monsieur and Madame Féburier, whose piety and generosity were the edification of all who came into contact with them. Their fortune was large, and they lived accordingly, keeping up an establishment with horses, carriages, servants, etc., in proportion to their income, and giving alms with royal profusion. When M. Féburier died, he was buried under the high-altar in that church of La Tour St. Joseph, which had been built by his bounty; and then his widow, having put her worldly affairs in order, at the age of sixty-two years, craved humbly for admission into the ranks of the Little Sisters. As a rule, novices are not received after the age of twenty-five, but an exception was bound to be made for this great and holy benefactress, and she, who had all her life been accustomed to luxury and comfort of every description, with servants to do her slightest bidding, would never hear

of any difference being made between her and the other novices, and it required all the power of the word *obedience* to induce her to accept of the smallest mitigation of the rule, as necessitated by her age, her former habits, and, above all, her extremely delicate health. Her great delight was to be employed in the farmyard, where she was found one day by a former friend with a large straw hat covering her white cap to protect her head from the rays of the sun, in no wise distinguishable from the other novices; and on this friend's expressing surprise at seeing her at this post of all others, and asking if it were not too fatiguing for her, she replied gaily, "Oh dear, no! There is only one thing which is rather tiresome; I have always been terrified at cows, and I believe the animals know it, for they won't obey me, and I have great trouble in driving them home!" Madame Féburier was sent to the south of France in later years, the climate there being considered better for her health.

Soon, under the energetic direction of Père Le Pailleur, the property of La Tour St. Joseph underwent a radical change. The vast ponds from which arose fogs and miasmas were filled in with the stones and rubble collected from the waste spaces of the higher ground; this was levelled and drained for ploughing purposes; overgrown timber and brushwood was cleared so as to give air and space; large

kitchen-gardens were laid out—in a word, everything possible was done to secure the essential conditions of health and salubrity needful for such an establishment, and all under the administration of a young ecclesiastic, until quite latterly a humble country parish priest! Truly, indeed, was the hand of God with Père Le Pailleur in a marked and visible manner, in all his undertakings and in all his dealings!

Here now the venerable founder took up his residence (except when visits to new Foundations called him away), far from worldly honours and Church dignities, consecrating his life and his strength (often indeed taxing the latter to the uttermost) to the formation of his daughters in the path to which God had called them through his medium.

As in other Orders, the postulants usually make their four or five months' probation in the House nearest to their place of residence, unless, as sometimes happens, the proximity of too many relations and friends renders it desirable to go farther from home, when frequently St. Servan is chosen, as being the cradle of the Institution—*notre petit berceau*, as it is called in the lowly, loving phraseology of the Congregation, where everything is *little*—"Little Family," "*petits vieux*, *petites bonnes femmes*," etc. —which every Sister is proud and happy to have visited, after which all make their novitiate at La Tour. And a strange gathering it is nowadays, of

all nations and of all classes!—French from every department and colony, Spaniards many, Belgians many, English and Americans many, some few Swiss and Germans even, Italians very few. It is quite an erroneous idea to imagine, as many do, that the novices are recruited solely from the lower orders; in Brittany, and at the commencement, it is true, the postulants have been chiefly young servants or country girls of the poorer classes, but in other parts (Paris and foreign countries especially) royal princesses even and ladies of noble descent have been discovered meekly hiding their faces under the close-fitting white cap.

Every talent as well as every pair of hands finds its use at the Mother-House. There is the ignorant country girl to be shown how to read and write; there are languages to be taught and learnt in order to fulfil charges in distant Foundations; there is chemistry to be practised and taught, together with the art of healing the sick by simples, of bandaging wounds, and of dressing sores; there are fields and gardens to oversee, store-chambers of very vast proportions to superintend; and, above all, there is the *secrétariat*, an institution by itself, which requires eight or ten Little Sisters as scribes in constant communication with the other Houses in all parts of the globe. For all these offices education and even distinction of manners are invaluable, besides the teach-

ing of cooking, sewing, mending and darning (most important items in a Little Sister's education), scrubbing, polishing, gardening, and agriculture, arts which every novice has to learn in a certain measure so that she may be capable of filling any post to which she may be subsequently appointed. Every novice is formed at the one Mother-House, on the one system, and under the eye of the one Mother-General, whom happily God has preserved to her devoted Family to this day.

The postulant, during her period of probation, still wears her worldly garb, with the addition of a little black cap and black pelerine, the strong country shoe and short stuff petticoat or the natty highlow and fine-textured skirt alone betraying the social position whence she came ; whilst the novice's habit, on beginning her new life at La Tour, differs very slightly from that of the Little Sister. She has the same full black serge skirt, the same handkerchief crossed over the chest, and the same close white cap, underneath which, however, unlike the professed Sister, the hair shows. It is at this stage that she gives up the name by which she has been known in the world, and loses her identity under the protection of some Saint, by whose name she is henceforth known ; and as now the Little Sisters have multiplied far over and above the calendar for the year, she generally has a second Saint's name added to the first by which to distinguish

her from her Sisters, as for instance, "Angélique de St. Paul," "Clément Joseph," "Augustine de St. François," etc.

It is impossible to glean from one Little Sister anything concerning the name or family of another—unless you happen to have been personally acquainted—so closely shrouded is she in her cloak of humility and self-oblivion; and it is often on her deathbed only that those of her own community learn the name of the Sister who has just gone from them, so determined has she been to remain hidden and unknown, to *se faire toute petite*,[1] according to the constant injunction of the Good-Father.

[1] Make herself quite small.

CHAPTER VIII.

LA TOUR ST. JOSEPH—*continued.*

An inhabitant of St. Servan, a lady whose recollections of that Foundation have already been frequently quoted, gives an interesting account of a clothing and profession at the Tour. The day chosen was St. Joseph's Feast, and the priest appointed to receive the vows was the Abbé Collet, Curé of St. Servan. Having arrived at the Tour on the eve, this lady had the happiness of being received at the table of the Good-Father General, and of listening to much deeply interesting and edifying conversation.

On the morning of the feast, she tells us, before daybreak, there was a busy stir, a regiment of young novices were raking and sweeping the garden paths, so that not a withered leaf, not a dried twig should remain to speak of winter on this joyous spring morning. All was *en fête*, out-of-doors as well as on the smiling faces of these happy young girls, which all told of peace and innocence within. Besides the religious ceremony, there was general recreation

throughout the day. At table, to use the novices' own forcible expression, the latter have one special dish on these occasions, *le plat des langues*,[1] which means that they may talk as much as they like.

Silence, be it said in parenthesis, is not the only mortification practised during meals. The refectory is the scene of many a lesson in this virtue; as, for instance, in order to prepare the Little Sisters for the privations of a Foundation, and for the divers habits of foreign countries, the postulants are given no chairs; they must kneel or else sit upon their heels, after the fashion of the Spaniards and other nations in their churches, where seats are unknown, and where, without preliminary experience, the Sisters would suffer terribly during the long parochial offices.

The ceremony, consisting of a clothing, a profession, a renewal of the three years' vows, and a taking of perpetual vows, commenced at ten o'clock. The postulants, twenty-two in number, are dressed in plain white muslin—this material is chosen according to their vow of extreme poverty—and their heads covered with a long white veil, on which is placed a crown of white roses. They begin by asking "the grace of God and the happiness of entering the Family of the Little Sisters of the Poor," to which the presiding ecclesiastic makes answer, "And I, in the name of the Little Family, receive your request." Later, to

[1] A dish of tongues.

the already professed, he says, "I receive your vows." He then goes on to tell them of the obligations they are incurring. "My Sisters," he says, "since you wish to enter the Family of the Little Sisters of the Poor, in order that in days to come you may not say that you have not been warmed, I tell and declare to you now, in the name of this Family, that if you wish to remain in it you will be compelled to practise the abnegation of self above all else, giving up your own judgment and will in order to subject these to obedience; to work and to watch, day and night, in the service of the aged, the sick, and the infirm; to bear with every kind of mortification; to wear mean clothing; to endure contempt of your poverty, the shame of having to beg; and, over and above all this, perpetual reproof, rejection, and humiliation; whilst, on the other hand, on Almighty God's behalf, I promise you eternal life, if by His grace you are faithful in observing and bearing all these things as far as human weakness will permit."

The ecclesiastic then hands to each postulant, after blessing it, the insignia of the religious habit—the dress, which indicates innocence and humility; the cap, obedience; the girdle, chastity; and the crucifix (which the Little Sister, in her humility, wears *underneath* her habit instead of above like other religious), the spirit and practice of mortification.

Whilst the newly consecrated novices retired to

vest themselves in their habit, their elder Sisters in religion filled the church with hymns of praise; the large number of fresh young voices rendering the volume of sound imposing as well as devotional. According to their Constitutions, the Little Sisters have no organ or any other musical instrument in their chapels, neither may they have gold or silver candlesticks upon the altar (these must be of wood), nor yet gold or silver bullion in the decoration of their church vestments; everything must be of the humblest and lowliest.

When the novices returned, clothed in their modest black habit, each knelt in turn before the Abbé Collet, whilst he gave her the name (chosen by the Good-Father) under which she should be known henceforth in the Little Family and to the outside world.

After the novices, came the turn of the Sisters, thirty in number, who had made their vows for the term of three years, as, after the first year's noviciate, those novices whose vocation has been exercised in the practices of obedience and austerity are admitted to probation, as it is called. Never had happier countenances been seen! These Sisters had awaited this blessed moment with impatience, many of them dreading, in their humility, lest the Superiors should think them unworthy of so great a favour. And now they in their turn kneel at the feet of the officiating

priest, to take the four vows of obedience, poverty, chastity, and hospitality, which will bind them until the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, three years hence. The Litany of the Saints is sung, during which the priest blesses them solemnly, and hands to each a scapular (made out of a piece of black stuff, with a small white cross worked upon it, which, like her crucifix, the Little Sister wears unseen beneath her habit) and a breviary; after which, all prostrate themselves in silence upon the ground, and lie, covered with a pall, at the foot of the high altar, whilst the *De Profundis* is sung, to show that they are dead to the world. At the words, "*Levez vous, vous qui dormez, et le Seigneur vous illuminera*," [1] they rise up and give each other the kiss of peace, whilst a canticle of thanksgiving is being sung.

Not even yet is the ceremony ended. As these happy-faced Sisters take their places in the body of the church, twelve Little Sisters walk up the middle aisle, on whose countenances may be traced the lines written by many a care, many a fatigue, many a battle fought with the elements, with poverty, with privation and want. These are Little Sisters who have already borne the burden and heat of the day, and who come to ratify the final consecration of their lives to the service of God and His poor, by taking perpetual vows.

[1] "Rise up, ye who sleep, and the Lord will give you light."

The Little Sisters, as we have already said, live under the rule of St. Augustine, with constitutions adapted to the aim and object of the Institution by M. Le Pailleur, their founder, whom His Holiness Pius IX. nominated Superior-General of the Little Family, when he gave his approval of the Congregation by a Papal brief, on July 9, 1854. Its civil existence was legally recognized by an Imperial decree, dated January 9, 1856, whilst the supreme and definitive Papal sanction was conferred by a bull of the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII., dated July 17, 1886.

The ceremony was at an end, and the visitors then left the church and passed into a spacious room, where a breakfast-table was abundantly spread for the greater part of the guests—priests from the environs and general visitors—presided over by the venerable Father-General, whilst the relations of the newly professed Sisters were seated at little tables apart, a delicate attention on the part of the Good-Father, who invariably strove by every act which kindness and sympathy could suggest to soften the bitterness of the sacrifice which they had been called upon to make—a sacrifice often far harder, and even more meritorious perhaps, than that of the young novice, being not of their own choosing, and unaccompanied by the joy which follows the voluntary act of the religious.

The viands, of every variety and description, were

all of home production; the bread was baked from flour ground in the home mill, after the wheat had been gathered from the home fields; the cider was made from the apples of the home orchards; the beef, the mutton, the poultry, were of home raising,—the Tour possessing within its precincts every article required for its own consumption; and it is difficult to say which, of all the different departments, is the most admirably managed or the most interesting to see—the neat farmstead, with its row of sleek cows waiting to be milked; the green meadows, with sheep grazing in large numbers; the poultry-yard; the pig-sties; or the orchards and gardens, which one and all testify to the wonderful administrative capacity of Père Le Pailleur, in matters temporal as well as spiritual.

After the breakfast, the Good-Father, Little Sisters, and visitors all met together in the gardens. The touching relationship existing between Père Le Pailleur and his daughters is almost impossible to describe in anything like adequate terms, so profoundly filial is it on the part of the Little Sisters, so lovingly paternal on that of their venerable Superior. The moment the Father-General appeared in the midst of his family, four or five hundred Little Sisters—postulants, novices, professed, Good-Mothers on a visit to the Tour, Little Sister-Assistants, visitors, strangers—went down upon their knees to

ask the Good-Father's blessing. And he gave this blessing quite simply, quite naturally, his serenity not one whit disturbed by so much homage, and the profound humility written on every feature of his holy, benevolent countenance, showing itself in every word which fell from his lips. He is too holy, too simple, too single-hearted to take it for himself; he knows that he is but the feeble instrument whom Almighty God has chosen for this work, and that it is He, and He alone, Who is receiving all this honour in the person of His servant. A less holy man would feel perturbed at it, his own personality would give him scruples; but a saint no longer remembers his own personality—he sees nothing but God!

After recreation in the garden, the lady whose reminiscences we have quoted returned to the house, where at last she had the happiness of an interview with her old friend, Jeanne Jugan, Sister Marie de la Croix, who, on her side, was overjoyed at seeing a familiar face from St. Servan, and at hearing news of the many benefactors in that town, for whom she cherished a warm, grateful affection. Although eighty-four years of age, her mind was still clear and bright, and she was tall and straight as ever, as she came towards her friend, leaning upon a stick with one hand, and upon the arm of a young novice with the other.

And then a little incident occurred which proved

that Jeanne's zeal had in no wise slackened with age. A young English lady, a Protestant, had accompanied some friends to witness the morning's ceremony, in which one of her own sisters had borne a part, and her devout attitude, and the varying emotions depicted on her countenance, had led one of the assistants to suggest that if the Good-Father were to speak to her on the subject, she might also, perhaps, become a convert to the Catholic Faith.

"No, no," he had replied; "let grace alone work and speak. Let us help her by our prayers only, and let the hospitality and kind welcome she has received be her only souvenir of the fête-day which she has spent at the Tour!"

Jeanne, not having been present, knew nothing of all this; but, observing the young girl standing near, amongst a group of visitors, said to herself that perhaps a word in season might touch her heart, and went straight up to her.

"My dear young lady," she began, giving her old familiar curtsy, "you must become a Catholic." She repeated these words twice, and that was all she said, as the English girl blushed deeply, and turned hastily away.

"But, Sister Marie de la Croix," exclaimed some one present, "the Good-Father did not wish any one to mention religion to that young lady!"

"Ah! my dear," rejoined Jeanne, quickly, "I did not know that. I have not been disobedient, therefore; and that is the great thing. Well, God allowed it, and no doubt these words will come back to her again and again. She will think them over, and who knows? My voice is very weak, but grace is so powerful!"

When this little scene was repeated to Père Le Pailleur, he smiled and said, "Ah! that is just like our dear, simple, old daughter!"

Jeanne would never allow strangers to call her anything but Sister Marie de la Croix. "Don't call me Jeanne Jugan," she would say. "Jeanne Jugan died some forty or fifty years ago; and there is nobody here but Sister Marie de la Croix, all unworthy as she is of the fine name!"

Never did a visitor come to the Tour without asking for Jeanne, who was truly the "treasure of the sacristy," the author of these pages amongst the number. It was in the year 1875. To our extreme regret, both the venerable Superiors were away. "But," we were told, "Sister Marie de la Croix will receive Monsieur and Madame." Just in the manner above quoted, the holy old Sister came into the parlour, leaning on her stick and on the arm of a bright-faced Little Sister, and afterwards took a few turns with us in the wide alleys of the garden, so erect, and walking with so firm a step, that it seemed

to us as if she scarcely needed any support. That which struck us the most about her, was the exceeding sweetness of her smile, which lit up her face as it rested upon the person to whom she was speaking. We were perfect strangers to her, but, as we bade her farewell, and asked her to pray for our little girl left at home, too young to make the expedition to La Tour, she took from her pocket a little round, wooden case, containing a tiny statue of St. Joseph (every Little Sister carries a figure of St. Joseph in her pocket), and said, "Give this to your little child as a souvenir of Sister Marie de la Croix." This little St. Joseph has since been more than once put to the service of the Little Family. When the *quêtes* have been especially bad, and hearts very obdurate, it has been lent to the Little Sister-*quêteuses*, in hopes that, through the virtue of its original holy possessor, it may have efficacy in helping the successors to her office!

The Tour is, as we have said before, the habitual residence of the Superiors, where they are accessible to all, and whither, difficult of access though it is, owing to the distance from the railway stations (Combourg on the one side, and Dinan on the other), the badly kept, hilly roads, and the rickety old shandrydans on hire at either place, a stream of visitors, lay and ecclesiastic, finds its way almost from year's end to year's end. In the summer season, however, at

haymaking time especially, the Good-Father and Mother-General have been wont to make their escape to a little house which they possess on the sea-coast at Minihic, a hamlet near St. Malo, there to enjoy a few weeks' rest and privacy. Here, chosen friends alone have been privileged to enter, one of whom, the celebrated writer Louis Veuillot, gives so graphic an account of his visit in one of his letters,[1] that we quote it in his own words—

"Having become a veritable Little Sister myself at heart, I discovered, this morning, that if the Tour be paradise, it is the paradise of sinners; whereas, here (Minihic) is the paradise of the elect. I have the Good-Father, the Good-Mother, and the Mistress of Novices all to myself. I am fed upon ormers, bass, prawns, and pumpkin-soup, and digest my food upon cliffs which are grassy lawns, padded (*ouatées*) with flowers of gold and silver and purple. From my window I behold sea, sand, and rocks. Away in the distance are St. Malo with its steeple, and St. Servan with its fat tower. Erquy, our Erquy, is not far from Cap Fréhel, which I can see also. There are trees, too. I am enjoying a great stillness, enlivened by the sea-salt of our Good-Mother General. Finally, I stay till to-morrow, and it is very admirable of me not to remain any longer, I consider; but one has to be reasonable. You cannot imagine a more

[1] To his sister, April 20, 1873.

charming seaside place—not a bathing-cabin, not a villa. It is Erquy over again, but wilder. Every one is in good health. The body of dear old Féburier is expected at the Tour one of these days, brought down by Thureau and Olivier *fils*. Madame Féburier remains at the Tour to make her novitiate; that excellent and charming woman desires to end her life in religion, near the body of her husband, in the shadow of the beautiful church she has built. All this is good and beautiful!"

Louis Veuillot was one of the most devoted admirers and intimate friends of the Little Sisters. In the six large volumes of his Correspondence there is scarcely a letter but has some passing mention of one member or another of the Little Family. The Good-Mother General was godmother to one of his daughters. On the occasion of the baptism of Mademoiselle Veuillot a large breakfast was given, at which the Comte de Montalembert assisted, where he met Good-Mother Marie Augustine for the first time. About halfway through the *déjeuner*, Montalembert suddenly turned to his neighbour and exclaimed, "How is this? I understood I was going to meet a simple little peasant girl, and I find a most intelligent and clever woman?" so struck was he with the sprightly, intel lectual conversation of the Good-Mother General. In testimony of the latter's wonderful intelligence, may be mentioned the fact of her intuitive knowledge of

Latin. Père le Pailleur would turn to her sometimes when a long Latin phrase had been used, and ask, "Do you know what that meant, my daughter?" And she would give the translation without hesitation, her quickness of perception teaching her a language which she had never learnt! Her ready wit, rendered the more racy by her quaint Servannesque expressions, partly countrified and partly maritime, has over and over again been quoted by Louis Veuillot in his Letters.

Veuillot's especial favourite, however, was the Good-Mother General's sister, Bonne-Mère Conception,[1] Assistant-General of the Congregation, and no other than the Eulalie Jamet who used to tease her elder sister Marie so unmercifully about her basket, etc., in the St. Servan days, of whom he wrote to the Bishop of Strasburg (when a Foundation was projected in that city,[2] in 1856) in the following terms:—"The Good-Mother Conception, the bearer of this letter, is *une ancienne de la famille*, sister of the Superioress-General, who founded it. I take leave to add that this excellent religious is a particular friend of my sister's and of my own. In the recent trials with which God

[1] This Bonne-Mère Marie de la Conception died in the month of December, 1892, to the great grief of the Congregation and of all friends of the Little Sisters.

[2] At the time of the Franco-German War the Little Sisters were compelled to leave Strasburg, and, unwilling to desert their aged charges, carried the latter across the frontier on their backs.

has afflicted us, she has been a consoling angel in our midst. She received the last sigh of my daughter,[1] and it is to her charity we owe all the comfort and consolation which it was possible for a human being to give at such cruel moments. The simplicity of this dear Sister, added to her other merits, renders her a living type of the virtues of her admirable Congregation."

Writing from the Tour St. Joseph to his sister, on another occasion (in 1874), Veuillot says, "I arrived last night in an open spring-cart, frozen" (this was in July!). "The Good-Father? Absent. The Good-Mother? Away! I thought the world was going to end, till the portress added that Conception had just come in, and life then did not entirely forsake me. Dear, charming Conception came hurrying up at that moment, tying her cap as she came. No one expected me! And yet I had written. But my letter had gone astray. The Good-Father is with his family, somewhat indisposed. The Good-Mother is shivering at St. Servan, where her health obliges her to make a short stay; and so Conception is alone at the head of the government. She takes advantage

[1] Veuillot had offered this child of his to Almighty God, in the hopes of her becoming a Little Sister of the Poor. At her funeral ten Little Sisters walked on either side of the coffin, which led the bystanders to think it was a Little Sister who was being carried to the grave.

of her presidency to receive me like a king, or rather, like a Shah of Persia. Let this be said without offending her, for she is a most capable MacMahon. And I, catching the spirit of the house, suffer myself to be spoilt. . . . The result of all this is that I shall await the return of the Good-Father, and not leave until Tuesday. Meanwhile I shall visit all the marvels of the Tour, and they are many and exquisite. Indeed, it is an enchanting spot! What silence, and what gaiety! What work, and what repose! What a beautiful and marvellous manufactory wherein to fabricate *la chrétienne, l'aumône, et le salut!*[1] I shall contemplate all this during three or four days, shall write a few letters, and return enriched by a great souvenir and a great lesson. People may say what they like about Père Le Pailleur—he has done a grand thing."

In course of the same month of July, we find Veuillot again at the Tour, in company with an artist of the name of Lafon, who is painting the portraits of the Good-Superiors. In the vigorous and humorous language of the great writer, we find the sittings described as "very funny." "The portraits promise well," he writes. "The two models are there, with the assistance of the Novice-Mistress and of the very charming Pauline.[2] I keep the conversation going,

[1] The Christian woman, alms, and salvation.

[2] One of the Good-Mother Assistants.

and explain that it cannot be expected that the Good-Father's likeness should be perfect as yet, before the first wash of colour has been laid on. I am believed by an effort of faith, and I am agreed with by an effort of politeness. The Good-Mother especially is impatient and fidgety to the last degree, and talks nineteen to the dozen, whilst, like so many fireworks, her marvellous Servannesque expressions keep starting out one after another. Nevertheless she is really very pleased. 'That is well, my little Monsieur Lafon! *Ah! par exemple!* There is a little bit under the nose very well done! Ah! that's well caught! That's it! The Good-Father will be well done after all! My good little Lafon won't miss his effect!' In reality the two sketches are exquisite, and there is every reason to hope that the portraits will be all that could be wished. I had one agonizing moment. That miserable Lafon had a picturesque fancy, and was for putting the Good-Mother on her knees before St. Joseph! He was going to propose it. I thought I should have to pitch him out of the window! Happily he listened to reason, and will make two life-sized portraits, in a dignified sitting position. We think of nothing but the pictures."[1]

[1] The pictures by Lafon are not the only portraits extant of the Good-Superiors. Fine portraits of them were painted a few years ago by Cabanel, and exposed in the Paris Salon. The venerable founder of the Congregation of Little Sisters of

The services rendered by Louis Veuillot to the Little Family were innumerable, both by articles in his newspaper *The Univers* and by letters and personal visits to influential personages on their behalf—as, for instance, in the matter of the Cracow and Warsaw Foundations (made by Good-Mother Conception) which offered many difficulties, but which a warm letter of recommendation to Monseigneur, then Abbé, Mislin smoothed over, sent the Sisters on their way rejoicing, and produced the ejaculation from its writer, "How glad I am that the poor hand of a Veuillot has been able to reach as far as this in the service of his dear Sisters!" Later, when the indefatigable Conception, "ill, but always smiling," was at work about a Foundation at Vienna, all negotiations would have fallen through had it not been for the good offices of Veuillot's friends, Mgr. Mislin especially, who, it would

the Poor is represented in his own humble little room, seated at a plain deal table, which is covered with papers, over which hangs a crucifix, his face turned towards the spectator, on whom rests his mild yet scrutinizing gaze, in the attitude of a person receiving a visitor. The Good-Mother General, with a like simplicity, is represented seated in a whitewashed chamber, on a plain wooden chair, a map of the world and a list of the Foundations hanging against the wall at her back, and her white cap, black garments, and thick country shoe, the only decorative detail of which the skilful hand of the painter has made use, in order to bring out the absolute truthfulness to nature of these wonderful portraits.

appear, carried the day against a certain rather miserly princess.[1]

At Tours troubles arose with the Archbishop at a certain moment (1851); at once Veuillot wrote to a friend at Rome, bidding him hasten to his Eminence Cardinal Fornari, and tell that prelate that the Little Sisters of the Poor commended themselves to his gracious protection, that they were beginning to have difficulties with the Archbishop of Tours, and that it was most important that a decree from Rome should establish their situation.

Two years later we find this devoted friend at Rome himself, pleading the cause of his dear Little Sisters with his Holiness Pius IX.[2] After a little preliminary conversation about the Paris House, the Sovereign Pontiff remarked, "But these Sisters must submit their Constitutions to us. We will give them a Brief, and then they will be left in peace." Veuillot took this opportunity to call the attention of his Holiness to the leading features of a work so all-important to the poor and to religion.

Shortly after his audience he wrote joyfully to his

[1] The amount of journeys which Good-Mother Conception undertook and Foundations which she made are positively bewildering. In America alone the Houses which she founded number twelve. Well may Veuillot say of her that she is *intarrissable en anecdotes.*

[2] Letter VII., To his sister.

sister (April, 1853), "The Little Sisters are approved at Rome, and their success has been complete. Père Le Pailleur writes me word that he will be at Rennes on August 20, where he will hold a general convocation. We shall be convoked with the rest."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOME FOR THE AGED.

And now, having described the Mother-House, we will take a look into one of the Homes and give a general idea of what these establishments are like, and what is the daily routine of a Little Sister of the Poor when once she has left the Tour St. Joseph.

First of all comes the making of a Foundation itself, for which a little detachment is sent forth from the Novitiate, generally consisting of a Good-Mother and four or five Sisters, and for all worldly possessions they are given a silver piece worth fifty centimes (fivepence), a little statue or picture of Our Blessed Lady, and one of St. Joseph, with the Good-Father's blessing. A house is provided for them, it is true, but the bare walls of it only, and the holy colonists arrive in perfect ignorance of the town to which they are destined, and of the resources which it may offer. The following letter, written from a newly made Foundation by one of the Little Sisters, will give a faithful idea of all, whether in London, Paris, New

York, or Calcutta, the local colouring, indeed, making very slight variation in each case.

"We arrived at our destination," runs the letter, "on February 8, and by a holy dispensation of Providence, we had been unable to give notice of our coming until the night before. So we made our way to our future home, which certainly did not shine by its luxury! As the snow was falling thickly and it was freezing hard, our first care was to find a mason and put up some sort of a stove. Our benefactor provided us with a little money for pressing wants, and some kind nuns came to beg us to dine with them; but we preferred to stay at home, and set about preparing dinner for ourselves. Some of us tore up a few bricks out of the courtyard and installed them for cooking purposes in the chimney; the others went in search of wood and coal. A fire was lit, bread, butter, and potatoes arranged upon the dining-table—that is to say, the floor. As for chairs, the Little Sisters carry theirs with them wherever they go! The statues of Our Blessed Lady and of St. Joseph, precious souvenirs of the Good-Father, are brought out, and we seat ourselves, gaiety on our lips as in our hearts. Scarcely were we seated than the bell rang. Six chairs arrive! A second ring comes; this time a hot dinner, sent by Providence, with spoons, knives, and forks to eat it with! Shortly after that, plates and dishes, candles, and a bunch of turnips, two of

which are instantly converted into candlesticks! It is impossible to eat our dinner, the bell does nothing but ring; and, as every Little Sister jumps up to answer it, the Good-Mother has to appoint a Sister-portress there and then. An inkstand and pens are the next gifts to arrive, a statue of Our Lady, and, most useful of all, some straw and some coarse sacking with which to make beds; and as the room has nothing but apertures in place of windows, we close these by spreading pieces of sacking across the openings. In spite of these precautions, however, the cold was so intense that we could not manage to keep ourselves warm the first nights, a little misadventure which had no effect upon our spirits.

"Our first visitors were some poor washerwomen, who clubbed together to bring us articles of primary necessity, amongst other things some breakfast, which arrived very opportunely, as we had nothing to eat but a crust of bread, which each Little Sister passed to her neighbour, on the pretext that she was not hungry. Here, as almost everywhere else, the poor were the first to help the poor. But yet our happiness was incomplete. We had no old people to take care of, and a Little Sister cannot be happy without them! So glad, indeed, were we when, in a few days' time, the house was in a condition to receive ten pensioners, for it is they who hold the key of God's treasures in their hand. The poor things could not believe their

own eyes when they found themselves comfortably settled in nice warm beds and exclaimed, 'Well, I never thought one was happy like this except in Paradise!'"

The most casual observer cannot fail to be aware of the destination of the large building, generally composed of two vast wings two or three stories high, to which the regular rows of windows on either side would give rather the appearance of a barrack or factory, were it not for the modest little chapel which stands in their midst and the touching sentence written on the gate, sometimes in two or three languages, "*Blessed is the hand which gives a penny for the Aged Poor.*" You ring the bell, and when the door opens find yourself opposite the bright, welcoming face of the Little Sister-portress peeping out from her lodge window, where she sits busily sewing all day, and generally one of the old women at her side who has still eyesight enough to thread a needle and sufficient intelligence to answer the bell in a momentary absence of the Sister. You are then conducted across a yard, or a large enclosure (if in the country this is surrounded by a good high wall, as the old inmates, aged and infirm though they be, do not fail to play truant, if the coast is too clear, in order to beg a drop of spirits at a neighbouring public-house) to the parlour, a scrupulously clean little room with whitewashed walls, half a dozen rush-bottomed

chairs, and a small statue of St. Joseph on the mantelpiece, round whose neck is frequently attached a slip of paper requesting that he will provide the requirement which is the most pressing at the moment, and this naturally is perused by every visitor whilst waiting for the arrival of the Good-Mother.

Every House has its Good-Mother, who is appointed for a term of three years, at the end of which she returns to the Tour, where, at a chapter held by the Superiors and Assistants-General, she may be (and generally is) re-elected for three years more, after which period she is sent to another House, there to take her place as an ordinary Little Sister. By this mode of proceeding the spirit of detachment and humility is ceaselessly practised. From every part of the world these Good-Mothers come at the expiration of their time, and many of our readers may have often asked themselves why, in the month of July sometimes, the steamboats plying between Southampton and St. Malo have so many black-cloaked Sisters amongst their passengers. Truly the office of Good-Mother is far from enviable, and the dignity of Superior is frequently, nay, usually, bought by a vast amount of fatigue, responsibility, and often most unjustifiable abuse, for the Superior bears the brunt of all exterior disagreeables—the impossibility, for instance, of admitting an old pensioner owing to want of a vacant bed, which by many a person who

makes a small yearly donation to the House is considered his or her right to exact; the exchange of a popular Little Sister with another House; the refusal to fall in with the views of some worthy lady who would like to re-model the Home after a pattern of her own; the unfortunate fact that her face is less pleasing than was that of her predecessor;—all these things she is made to feel, besides having the whole business and charge of the establishment upon her shoulders. There is nothing to distinguish her from the rest. She may be seen quite as often as the other Little Sisters with a blue linen working-apron tied round her waist, her superiority consisting in being everywhere at once, we might almost say—with her daughters, watching tenderly over their healths, rising perhaps two or three times a night to see whether those who are delicate are asleep, and have everything beside them which they may require; taking her turn at kitchen, wash-tub, or ironing-board, if hands are short; making hay with the hay-makers; gardening; giving an eye to the out-premises; looking in upon the old men and women every now and again with an encouraging smile or edifying word; and always ready to go to the parlour and receive visitors with as pleasant a welcome as if she had nothing in the world to do but listen to their conversation.

In the larger Houses there is generally a Little

Sister-Assistant, who replaces the Good-Mother when the latter is absent, besides about twelve or fourteen Little Sisters, each of whom has her distinct office.

From the parlour we make our way to the *salles*, or day-rooms of the aged inmates; first of all, to that of the old women, whom we find all seated near long tables, on which are placed the various kinds of work with which those who are not quite infirm while away their day. The principal industry is that of lint-making, which requires little eyesight, and may be made by even trembling fingers; and thus at least three parts of the old dames have a fluffy white bundle before them, which, they tell you with pride, is afterwards bought by the hospitals, unless, as too often happens, there is some poor creature in the House itself with wounds which consume the provision as fast as it can be made. Here one is mending stockings, articles of wearing-apparel which are miracles of darning in every shade and colour of wool—the odds and ends begged from shops; another, who has been a seamstress in her day, sits near a window, her feet tucked up on a *chaufferette*,[1] and holds up to you her work as you pass, whilst the Little Sister belonging to the room threads the needle for the failing old eyes. All are proud and happy to be still able to use their hands. Knitting-

[1] A kind of footstool or brasier, in which hot ashes are kept for the purpose of warming the feet.

needles are to be seen plying quickly, but here again the Sister must come to the rescue of many a dropped stitch. (In one house we visited there were no less than *sixteen* blind old women, and they were not by any means the most unhappy.) When an old jersey, petticoat, or pair of stockings even is past piecing and darning, it is passed on to another "artist," who invites us by a smile to visit the corner where she sits surrounded by heaps of parti coloured wool. (All love to be addressed, and the difficulty is not to make jealousies !) This good soul is armed with a kind of rake or comb, with which, after unravelling the fabric, she cards it out as a mattress is carded, and the wool then serves for the stuffing of warm, quilted bed-coverings.

The sunshine, streaming in through an open doorway, tempts us outside into a neat little enclosure, where, under a kind of trellised arbour, twenty or thirty more old women are sitting, and then we proceed upstairs to the infirmary and dormitories. The latter are alike in every House, long, well-lit, well-ventilated rooms, with rows of iron bedsteads on either side, each bed furnished with its two mattresses—the one straw, the other wool—its thick blanket, quilt, bolsters, and couple of pillows, the whole neatly covered over with the marvellous patchwork counterpanes which are a distinctive feature of the Little Sisters' Houses in every country—wonderful

works of art, made with every variety of pattern, colour, size, shape, and material, and of which the owner of the bed is extremely proud and jealous.

In the infirmary nearly every bed is occupied, and we remark that those poor creatures who are the greatest sufferers appear generally the happiest and the most grateful to the devoted Sisters. Grumblings and discontent are laid aside when the aching body can no longer turn without help; when the linen requires changing perhaps six and seven times a day, and the patient is paralyzed hand and foot; when the ulcerated limb requires dressing and bandaging, and all this is done so dexterously, so gently, and with such tender, pitying words, that it would be impossible for the most obdurate old heart not to be touched, and make a mental comparison between the present time and the days when, alone and neglected by family and children, he or she lay on a bed of sickness with hard words, filth, and starvation for a daily portion.

One poor old soul, who for four years had been a martyr to a cancer, which, beginning in her cheek, had gradually eaten away nearly the whole of her face, was looked upon by the Little Sisters as the benediction of the House; firstly, by the exercise (privilege they called it) of continual mortification of the senses in ministering to her loathsome disease,

and secondly by the spectacle of poor Jeannette's unvarying resignation, patience, and gratitude for every service so lovingly rendered her. Another old woman, likewise afflicted by a terrible cancer, was doubly a trial from the difficulty there was in pleasing her. She was very docile, and, at heart, was grateful to the Sister-infirmarian (whose own health suffered considerably from her incessant attendance upon this revolting malady), but was for ever imagining that some new remedy might be tried, and expressing new fancies, every one of which the good Sister tried to gratify; whilst poor Dominica consumed "cart-loads," as it was forcibly expressed, of lint, and utterly exhausted the already slender provision of linen belonging to the House.

A third bed was occupied by a poor sufferer of eighty years of age, literally brought in to die. She had been found by neighbouring peasants lying amongst some smouldering embers in a hovel, out in a lonely country place, where she lived quite alone, and had fallen into the fire. One leg was completely burnt, and the foot, blackened and charred, hung by a ligament only. And yet the poor thing had lingered on for a couple of weeks, long enough to make her peace with God, and receive Him in Holy Viaticum Whom she had forgotten for many a year, and long enough to give the Little Sisters who tended her the one consolation which nothing can mar, of bless-

ing God for having brought another soul through their means to a happy death.

By one of the beds a young Sister was reading aloud as we entered, and we asked her if the old folks enjoyed being read to (they seemed to us as though long past listening). "Oh yes," she answered, "we often read to them for an hour at a time; it gives them so much pleasure;" we thinking to ourselves as she spoke what an exertion it must be to read at the pitch of the voice to the poor old deaf ears for such a length of time!

In the ante-room were the more or less valid; but whose crippled, tottering limbs do not permit of their descending the staircase into the common room. Here, again, we found the bundles of lint and the knitting, but many and many a pair of hands which could do little but tell their beads, as their owners sat snugly ensconced in the roomy armchairs provided by the compassion of benefactors, or sunned themselves on the balcony outside, looking down the while at the busy little world beneath. Sometimes even memory and understanding have taken leave of these very, very old women—nearly a century old most of them—and they amuse themselves with a doll as in the days of their childhood, or fix the whole of their affections upon a muff, a straw hat, or some such object, which they even insist upon taking to bed with them.

A door leads from this room into the chapel, which is provided with a gallery, into which the armchair of the cripple may be wheeled whilst she or he hears Mass. Half the gallery belongs to the old women, and half to the old men, an opposite door opening into the infirmary of the latter, which is in every respect similar to that of the old women, except that well-thumbed books, newspapers, games of dominoes, draughts, etc., take the place of lint and needle-work.

The old men are almost invariably more active than the old women, and, being probably more robust by temperament, they do more outdoor work. Almost every trade finds its representative, much to the advantage of the House. There is the carpenter, the shoemaker, the upholsterer, the tailor, the gardener, the mason, the farm labourer, one and all proud to be employed as far as his poor strength will permit in the avocations of his former calling. In this manner they render great service. As a rule, the old men are also much the most tractable and contented, much the most anxious to please the Sisters, and much less quarrelsome amongst themselves. The very fact of filling posts of importance, such as that of sacristan, driver to the cart, stableman, caretaker of the cows and pigs, etc., gives them a sense of their own dignity as being still useful members of society. These old men will often become comparatively

robust and vigorous again under the effects of good nourishment and regular, sober living; and then the marvel is how the gentle Little Sisters are able to manage them and keep them in order, when we think that their antecedents have frequently been far from recommendable! It is true that the Sisters have certain punishments which they apply for insubordination; but the punishments are not very severe, and consist in the loss of an outing (once a month the old people have leave to spend a day out of the Home); the deprivation of the little morning's dram, which the Good-Father in his kind thoughtfulness allows to be given to these poor old fellows, who have, perhaps, drunk hard all their lives, and could not stand the sudden total abstinence; the temporary removal from some cherished post, etc.

One inveterate old sinner, who had been a rough customer in his day, a tall, muscular old man, was perpetually getting into trouble and breaking rules, a Little Sister told us, and finally, on one occasion, was insolent to the Good-Mother. The Good-Mother said nothing to him at the moment, but a few hours later called him aside, and told him very quietly how grieved she felt at his behaviour. "You are not chivalrous, my good little *père* Martin," she said. "You are a man and we are women. You are old enough to be a father to all of us Little Sisters. What are we to do if, instead of protecting us, you turn

against us?" The old poacher, who had expected a sound scolding, was so taken aback that he said not one word, but hung his head as he walked away. The next morning, however, he came up to the Good-Mother, and said, "*Ma Bonne-Mère*, I have been thinking over what you said, and you shall never complain of me again. I mean to punish myself, as you gave me no reproof, and for a whole year I will never take one of my outings." He kept his word, and from having been one of the most unruly, *père* Martin became the steadiest and most industrious of all the old men.[1]

A day which is dreaded by the Little Sisters in France is that of the elections, when all their old men go to the Town Hall to vote for deputy or mayor, as the case may be. Fine voters, forsooth, these poor old creatures, who know as much of politics as do the birds of the air! The Little Sisters make a point of influencing them in no wise; all they do is to beg of them to return quickly and *sober*. On one of the old men being asked by a friend of the House for whom he was going to vote one day, he replied, "To the party as gives me most cups of coffee!" a cup of coffee in this case meaning a small quantity of coffee and a large proportion of spirits!

[1] If an old man or woman proves quite incorrigible, returning intoxicated time after time, and has to be sent away, under no pretext whatever can he or she be readmitted.

The old men and women live entirely separate, each having a wing of the House to themselves. If, as happens occasionally, husband and wife have both entered the Home, they meet at certain times, and may be seen sitting together upon a garden bench in ground belonging to neither sex.

Next in our peregrinations came the linen-room, one of the marvels of the establishment, in the beautiful arrangement and neatness of its shelves, all too poorly filled, alas! with that most needful of all articles. The consumption of linen occasioned by the infirmities of the aged is something tremendous, and as that which comes to the House is generally old to begin with, it naturally does not last long. The Little Sister in charge has no sinecure, with mending and piecing and arranging all the old garments, which look so beautifully tidy and wearable when piled one above another in partitions on the shelves, to each of which is appended the number and name of the wearer. As a rule, the clothing brought in by the poor old souls on arrival is too dirty to be fit for anything but the fire, and the Sisters are glad when it is so, for, if by chance they (the old women especially) have brought a few decent things with them, they expect these to last for years, and are mightily offended when given a dress or a shawl which is new to them, even going so far sometimes as to accuse the Sisters of selling their clothes!

The exigencies of these *bons petits vieux* (in the north more especially, for in the south they are far more grateful and amenable) require nothing short of the angelic patience of a Little Sister to bear with them. As, for instance, on an occasion which fell under our notice quite lately. The Good-Mother of a very needy House thought that, as the winter was severe and damp, she would at any rate give all her old women a stout pair of shoes apiece, an item which cost an outlay of three hundred francs (£12). What was the gratitude of the recipients, and that loudly expressed? "Well, our Good-Mother must be rich if she can give us each a pair of shoes! She might at least give us a new dress apiece, too!"

The large cupboards next the linen-room are hung with a very motley collection of garments, old military capes, frock-coats, dress-coats, pilot-suits, smoking-jackets, dressing-gowns, beaver hats, fashionable wide-awakes, articles of every dimension and of every fashion, many somewhat threadbare, and all darned and patched in such perfection that one waistcoat in particular, in which we counted sixty joins, looked like a checked material instead of the patchwork made out of tailors' patterns which it really was!

We had often noticed the number of tall hats worn by the Little Sisters' old men in the streets, when following processions, funerals, etc., and won-

dered why more tall hats were given them than head-coverings of other shapes, till we were told that frequently an arrangement is entered into with the Good-Mother by other charitable institutions—the Night Refuges for instance—where donations of old clothing are accepted, the managers of which agree to exchange all the "chimney-pots" they receive for felts and straws more suited to the trades and professions of their younger *protégés*.

There still remained the kitchen to visit. It was near the hour of a meal, and on the large traditional range in the centre there were many huge saucepans boiling and bubbling. On inquiring into the contents of these, we were shown stews of savoury odour, products of club and restaurant dinners, and soup thickened with the broken pieces of bread neatly cut up, which came from the same source. "Would you like to see the process of utilizing the scraps?" we were asked, and accordingly we went into an adjoining room where several old women were employed under the directions of a Little Sister, the one chopping large pieces of bread into blocks, another scraping the crusts with a knife in order to make a dish of bread-crumbs which would be converted into a very excellent pudding, we were told; two or three more peeling and preparing vegetables; and finally the Little Sister in charge called our attention triumphantly to a new acquisition in the shape of a

machine for mincing meat, "a good benefactor" having had pity, she said, upon the toothless gums of many of her clients. The bread-room excited our wonder from the number of huge loaves arranged in the racks, and we expressed surprise how, if that were the day's consumption, the baker's bill was ever paid.

"Ah! indeed, you may well ask!" replied the Good-Mother. "The bread supply is a terrible item, and there are few Houses to which the Tour St. Joseph is not compelled to come to the help, at one time or another, if not every year, as is the case with many."

"And how do you manage about doctoring your old people?" we inquired; "ailing as they are, your doctors' fees must be heavy."

"As for that we are very fortunate," was the reply; "these good doctors give us and our old people their services for nothing, and are as kind and attentive in coming as though we paid them for their visits twice over; whilst as for medicaments, we have a little pharmacy of our own, which the Little Sisters replenish from time to time, by going out into the country and gathering certain herbs, roots, berries, etc., from which we extract the simple medicines we require."

The final industry which we saw in process was that of candle-making, a Little Sister having before her, on a sort of stand, a pile of ends of candles, wax,

paraffin, composite, etc., and lumps of stearine, which by means of a mould she converted into very shapely and serviceable candles.

Besides the home-avocations, there is first and foremost the *quête*, that mine of wealth, toil, and humiliation which is the root and mainstay of every House. Not a single Home is endowed, such a thing being contrary to the Constitutions of the Congregation, but must depend entirely upon Providence, and must daily put into literal practice the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is not true, however, as has been erroneously stated in print, and is believed by many, that the surplus of the day's receipts is forwarded to the Mother-House. Never was there a greater fallacy, for, first of all, there never is any surplus money, the bills owing being invariably far longer than the day's collection could suffice to settle, and depending generally for payment on some most unexpected donation, whilst, as we stated above, it is more often the Mother-House which has to come to the aid of the other Foundations.

Early in the morning, therefore, some six or eight Little Sisters set forth, two by two. Before they start, however, they go into the various *salles*, and bidding the old people kneel down with them, they make a prayer all together that the day's collection may be fruitful. First of all there are the two who beg for money, and gather the small sums which certain

benefactors prefer to give monthly or even weekly. Their well-known figures may be seen in every large town, as they walk swiftly along the pavement, their black hoods closely drawn over their white caps, looking from time to time at the well-worn note-book in which is written down the day's itinerary. The number of miles which they walk, the number of staircases which they climb (sometimes as many as a hundred and fifty flights in one day), are only known to the angels who count their steps. "The stairs would be nothing," said a Little Sister, "if only we had a spare pair of knees!" And by the side of these many steps, how many a door-bell rung in vain! How many a bitter refusal! How many a jeering speech! A Little Sister, upon one occasion out of many similar, had her cloak shut in the door of a mansion in a public thoroughfare, and for a whole hour she and her companion were kept standing upon the steps, whilst insolent footmen were peeping and laughing at them as they waited patiently on, after having rung and rung in vain.

One of the greatest difficulties the *quêteuses* have in their daily rounds is to find the owners of houses at home, and the lady who perhaps sends out a grudging shilling by her servant at the third or fourth visit from the Little Sisters does not reflect on the precious time which has been spent in waiting her good pleasure, or that the wear and tear of mind,

of hope so often deferred, not to speak of shoes and limbs, would have been better rewarded by a pleasant word from herself and a little kindness shown towards the devoted women who have knocked at her door. Moreover, she need never fear that the smallest offering will be beneath their gratitude; she has only to hear their warmly expressed thankfulness to feel ashamed at once of such a thought. Alms in money, alms in kind, anything and everything is accepted with joy. Often, indeed, do the poor dear Little Sisters walk from street to street, from door to door, from suburb to suburb, along busy quays and past rows of fine residences for a whole day, and perhaps all that they receive for their pains are a few coppers given by some working-woman, as poor as themselves, but who can *feel* the beauty of that charity of theirs which the rich and prosperous have failed to *see!*

Two other Little Sisters are told off for the distant *quêtes*, the country rounds, which in certain parts last for a week at a time, and require youth and strength to accomplish, being extremely fatiguing, often lying in mountain districts where houses and villages are scattered, and where perhaps they have to walk, with a large double bag slung on either side of their shoulders, fifteen or twenty miles in the course of a day, through rough roads, in all weathers, and, worst of all, without the possibility of having a regular

meal. The country-people, however, are generous as a rule, and love the Sisters, giving to them sufficiently to make these toilsome journeys worth while the undertaking. Sometimes they are given in kind, however, instead of in money—fruit, cheese, corn, etc.—which rather adds to their fatigue, although satisfactory as proof of good will.

Then there is, in some places, a second town of importance within daily walking distance, and hither two more *quêteuses* are told off; whilst, finally, there is the cart, driven by an old man, in the recesses of which are invariably seated two Little Sisters, surrounded by the cans and pails in which they collect remains of food, and donations in kind, at hotel, restaurant, private house, and market. These markets play a very important part in the Little Sisters' existence, and shall receive, as they deserve, special mention in another chapter.

CHAPTER X.

FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE FAMILY.

First and foremost may be counted Père Ernest Lelièvre, who, albeit a member of the Little Family, was one of its most energetic and most indefatigable friends, and whose labours and services on its behalf are legendary in the mouth of every Little Sister, together with his rare merit and signal virtues.

As has been stated in a previous chapter, Ernest Lelièvre sprang from a rich and influential family in the north of France. When a young man, he was sent to study law in Paris, and was especially recommended to Louis Veuillot, who watched over him with a fatherly interest which was quickened by the intelligence and aptitude of the young student, as well as by the winning grace of his manners. This interest was accompanied by a careful solicitude for Ernest's soul, which, despite the lad's Catholic bringing-up, had been caught with the glitter of the false philosophies of the day, and which might have swerved from the right path had it not been for the

enlightened zeal of the great polemist. Amongst the many counsels and exhortations given by Veuillot to his young friend, when seeking to calm down the effervescence of a youthful and too exuberant imagination by drawing his attention to facts and deeds, he one day mentioned the Little Sisters of the Poor and the wonderful work they had set afoot. At that time they had three Houses in Brittany, one at Tours, and had just started a Foundation in Paris.

Ernest was interested and touched by all he heard, but did not believe the half of it. To harbour and maintain poor old men and women in order to give them a comfortable and happy ending to their lives, and facilitate their access to heaven, was all well and good, was possible, indeed, though very difficult of accomplishment, he thought; but to undertake such a task without any other means than the practice of absolute poverty, to hold out the hand of a beggar for these old people, day by day, year by year, and to be content, Sisters as well as pensioners, with the bread of mendicancy—this was more than our young student could bring himself to credit, and he declared it was all a pure fable of Veuillot's fertile brain. Nevertheless, the account of the Little Sisters and their lives haunted him, it was perpetually recurring to his mind, and an attraction which he could not understand impelled him to make acquaintance with them and their work. The Paris House was situated

in the Students' quarter, and it often happened that Ernest met the Little Sister-*quêteuse* on her rounds, saw her going in and out of the *cafés* for the coffee-grounds which he had been told composed the breakfast of her charges, watched her carrying her great cans into the neighbouring houses, and frequently followed her at a distance from street to street, so greatly did the idea of a work supported by begging dwell upon his mind. It seemed to him as though an invisible force urged him to follow the humble, black-cloaked Sister, so deeply interested did he feel in her movements, and yet he would not surrender his convictions. "It is impossible, utterly impossible," he kept saying over and over to himself, as if to combat the charm which was leading him on.

His studies at an end, Ernest returned home to Lille, where he determined to solve the question which so troubled him, by seeing the Little Sisters at work under his own eyes. Accordingly he set about the founding of a Home at Lille itself—no difficult matter where an influential family like that of the Lelièvres took the undertaking in hand, and where the authorities generally were favourable. The devoted Sisters, however, had much to suffer in this Foundation from various and unexpected causes, and Ernest had full opportunity of studying their work in its every phase of self-abnegation and loving

charity. So completely did the beauty and truth of it take possession of his mind that it ended in his giving himself, as we said in a former chapter, heart and soul to the work; and thus, bidding farewell to the world, he started for Rome to make his theological studies at the French College, and when ordained priest, returned to kneel at the feet of Père Le Pailleur, entreating the Good-Father General to take the offering of himself, and of all he possessed, to do with as he should think fit then and thereafter.

This was in 1854, and until the date of his death, July 3, 1889, Père Ernest Marie co-operated in the progress and development of the Little Family with his whole might, serving it with every breath he drew. No fatigue had power to arrest his steps, no obstacle to daunt his fearless spirit. Brave and simple at the same time, he went straight forward, looking neither to the right nor to the left, girded with the armour of obedience, and clothed with the mantle of poverty, humility, and self-abnegation which, when consecrating his life to the Little Sisters, he had borrowed from them and made his own. Père Ernest had been liberally treated by Nature in the way of a great charm and distinction of manner, together with a ready wit and facility of conversation, which gifts predisposed every one in his favour, and which, when refined and sweetened by the inner purity of soul, and by the modesty and humility of a holy priest, resulted

in a winning graciousness which, as has been said of him many times, shone forth through his poor, coarse garments, through his patched, threadbare *soutane*,[1] through the large-checked cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, through the battered old hat which had braved many a scorching sun in every quarter of the globe, and had received the drenchings of many a storm in every sea upon which vessels plough their way! In these his poor accoutrements Père Ernest Marie has been likened to a living sermon of wonderful eloquence. He seemed to carry God's presence with him wherever he went, this holy, attractive Little Brother of the Poor. Wherever the work of the Little Sisters was to take root and develop, there was Père Ernest Marie as pioneer. His life may be said to have been spent on the road, with his breviary, as a pilgrim's staff, clasped under his arm. England, Spain, and America he traversed from end to end, and more than once; visiting Houses already established or preparing the way for new Foundations, studying ways and means, familiarizing himself with new countries and new customs, conquering difficulties, awakening sympathies, leading souls to comprehend the sublime beauties of charity and poverty, and perpetually sustaining the courage of those Little Sisters who, responding to the call of these distant lands, had ventured into countries of which perchance they had

[1] Priest's robe.

never even heard the names, the language of whose peoples they knew not one word, and whose sole itinerary was the blessing of the Good-Father and the desire to serve the aged poor. In scarcely eight years no fewer than sixteen Houses were founded by the intermediary of Père Ernest Marie in the most populous cities of the United States of America—at the cost of what labour, what exertions, what fatigues, may be better imagined than described. How often do not the Little Sisters remember his arriving at one or other of their Houses, exhausted, ready to drop from fatigue, storm-beaten and travel-worn, and yet his bright spirit undaunted—a gay, sparkling word ever on his lips, himself a living encouragement and tower of strength to those amidst whom he came!

From Père Lelièvre we are led almost naturally to speak of the many holy priests and religious who have been especially devoted to the Little Family. Many are now living, under whose episcopal purple beats a heart made very tender towards the Little Sisters by the recollection of years gone by when they held the function of chaplain to one of their Houses, and felt it their proudest privilege to serve Jesus Christ in the persons of His aged poor. The Vicar-General of Paris, M. l'Abbé Petit, whose devotion to the House in the Avenue de Breteuil during the cholera-time will be related in a future chapter, begged as a special favour of his Archbishop that he might be appointed

chaplain to the Little Sisters. The Cardinal replied by nominating him ecclesiastical superior of all the Paris Houses. "Now, indeed," wrote he on this occasion, "I love the Little Sisters more than ever, for they are my own family." He selected the Breteuil House as his particular charge, where he should say his daily Mass, etc., and one evening in November astonished and delighted the Good-Mother by sending for her to the parlour, and telling her that he had just made his retreat, and taken for his resolution that of being chaplain to her House. "Will you accept me?" he concluded. The answer may be readily imagined. And proud, indeed, were the old people when they found that not only one of the most distinguished ecclesiastics in Paris, one of their constant benefactors as dispenser of the Archiepiscopal charities, but a priest whom they already knew and loved well, was to become their own chaplain, their own property, as it were. Often before his Mass, the good Abbé would turn round from the altar and say a few words to his aged audience, whilst a very flame of love for his Master and of tenderness for his flock seemed to burst forth from his heart. A Little Sister said of him, "We were his children of predilection. He watched over us with the most paternal forethought, whilst it was a pleasure to see him with the old people, his joy and his charity were so great. He loved them and they loved him. One of his

greatest happinesses was to hear their confessions, and the closest intimacy reigned between him and his 'parish,' as he called us, where he made himself all things to all men, and the Vicar-General became 'our Père Petit.'"

All too soon did Paris and the Little Sisters lose the loving services of this good priest, who in the last days of his life, amidst the fatigues of a journey to Jerusalem and the grievous suffering of his mortal illness, far from country and friends, never forgot his "parish"; the Little Sisters were ever in his thoughts, and one of his last cares was that they should have a chaplain to succeed him who should love them as he had loved them.

Another name, venerated in the hearts of the Little Sisters, is that of Père de Plas, a holy religious, who had served his country on the decks of a man-of-war, and had distinguished himself in many a campaign up to the age of sixty, when he exchanged his brilliant uniform for the humble robe of a Jesuit; and who, after the execution of the decrees of expulsion in the year 1882, was enjoined by his superiors to spend his exile at Brest in the capacity of chaplain to the Little Sisters of the Poor. No sooner had the good old Father received this intimation than he wrote of it to his family as of a great boon, for which he thanked God. "I rejoice with exceeding great joy," ran his letter, "at the thought of living upon

the *dessertes*[1] of the town of Brest, and of really eating the bread of charity, just as if I were one of the old men taken in and maintained out of charity. . . . I consider it better than any bishopric to be appointed chaplain to the Little Sisters of the Poor."

So, truly like one of Christ's poor, this holy religious presented himself at the door of the Home in order to fulfil his new functions. In his own eyes he was only one old man the more added to its inmates, but in the eyes of the Little Sisters the aged priest was a messenger from heaven.

"My Good-Mother," said he, as he crossed the theshold, "I pray you to receive me for the love of God. Here is my little travelling-bag, which is all the property I possess, so you must please look upon me and treat me just as one of your old pensioners. I am not hard to please; a little corner, no matter where, will do as a lodging for me, and the common food will more than satisfy me. If the good God gives me strength, I may perhaps, as your chaplain, be able to render some services to the Little Sisters and their *bons vieux*."

When the holy old Father had taken possession of his room (a little chamber which just suited him, communicating as it did with the old men's infirmary, and its window looking out into the corridor whence he could discern the glimmer of the sanctuary lamp in the

[1] Remnants of food.

chapel), he wrote in his journal, "I came to ask the hospitality of the Little Sisters, and am lodged, not like an exile flying from persecution, but as a priest whose sacred character is held in honour. In vain have I implored to take at least one meal with the old men, but the Good-Mother will not hear of it."

And here in this peaceful haven, Père de Plas spent two years of his life, leading an existence as tranquil and uniform as that he had spent in community. Every morning at his Mass, which he said at six o'clock, he gave the old people a short instruction, and in the afternoon never failed to walk through their rooms and say a few kind words—visits which were hailed with delight by all, but especially by any old sailor who might be present, when the conversation would turn upon campaigns, foreign countries, dangers by land and sea, etc. Wednesdays were devoted to the Catechism, which the old folks pompously called their "Conferences," when the Father explained the mysteries of their faith, or exhorted them to the fulfilment of their duties in plain, simple language suited to the intellects of his audience, who listened to him with the greatest attention; for even though his discourses were often long, they were so skilfully seasoned with anecdotes and striking examples that the old souls hung upon his words; one of them (who had hitherto chafed against all authority) going

so far as to declare that since the arrival of Père de Plas, the Home from being a prison had become a paradise!

Great was the consternation and mourning of Little Sisters and old men and women alike, when the failing health of the Father occasioned his recall by his superiors. Père de Plas had for many a year felt a great drawing towards the Little Sisters and their work amongst the aged poor, and long before he ever dreamt of becoming their chaplain he had loved to say Mass in their chapel, never failing to take the opportunity of speaking to the old people from the altar. "It is a mission which delights me," he would say. "How often when I was in the navy I used to visit the Houses of these angels of charity with pleasure, and now I venerate them and esteem them even more highly since I have become a religious myself. I bless God Who permits me to evangelize the poor; it is a sweet and consoling vocation. May I acquit myself as well thereof as the old people listen to me with attention!"

And now we come to another order of friends, fast friends and universal, who from the very commencement of the work have shown the Little Sisters unvarying kindness and liberality—without whose liberality, indeed, the maintenance of the latter's poor old charges would have proved almost impossible. We speak of the market-women, not of one city alone,

but of every town where the black-cloaked figure of the Little Sister and her cans and baskets are a familiar sight. No sooner does she appear on the scene than it is often a case of almost jealousy with these rough-spoken but warm-hearted women, as to who shall find the best articles with which to fill the arms of the Little Sister, some of them even going so far as to run after her when, from motives of delicacy, she has omitted to call frequently at a particular stall, exclaiming, "Sister! Sister! why don't you come our way? You know you may always count upon us. We are only paying in advance for our own beds, as when we can work no longer, we shall claim your hospitality ourselves!" And so, aprons as well as baskets and cans are brought into requisition, for the heads of cabbage, the potatoes, the carrots, the bunches of vegetables, the pears, apples, fruits, etc., according to place and season, sometimes a pound of butter (rare and precious offering this!) held out on every side, whilst occasionally some well-disposed tradesman who has just made a good stroke of business will hoist a sack of rice or beans into the cart, or even a loaf of sugar, "to bring fresh luck," as he smilingly says.

In some places, southern towns especially, the Little Sisters are bidden every day to the markets, and never go away empty-handed. Many and many have been the acts of charity delicately rendered on the

part of these generous women, for the devotion of the good Sisters to the aged and infirm of their own class appeals to the sympathies of all. Here one of them leads the *quêteuses* up to the stall of a friend with whom the latter are as yet unacquainted; there another tackles the *sergent de ville*,[1] who is muttering something about "mendicity being forbidden," with an indignant, "The Little Sister is not begging; we asked her to come, and she accepts what we give her, and we suppose that no one is going to prevent our giving what we like!" And filling up the big basket to its very brim, and giving the lid a bang, she adds, turning to the Little Sister, "Next Tuesday, then, you'll come again. Don't forget!" with a look at the functionary which sends that worthy discomfited away. Now, a plainly dressed working-woman comes up to the Sisters, murmuring something they do not quite catch, and thinking it is a request for admission, they are beginning to tell her that they have not a vacant bed for the moment, when she repeats in a louder tone, "My good Little Sister, I have been saving up all my extra coppers for you these last eighteen months. I know of no better interest for my money. Here! take them; it is all I have at present." And putting into their hands a little linen bag, she hastens away, whilst tears of emotion glisten in the eyes of the astonished Little Sisters, as they

[1] Policeman.

perceive that the bag contains five pieces of gold, each representing twenty francs.

A Little Sister went one day to the Marché St. Germain (Paris), with a commission to buy half a dozen fresh eggs for an aged invalid. She was asked a penny apiece for the eggs, and went away again, saying, "Ah! my good woman, that is too dear for my purse; we must do without them." Scarcely had she reached home when the Little Sister of the kitchen went up to her and almost reproachfully asked how she came to spend such a lot of money as all those fresh eggs must have cost. "But I never bought any eggs at all," answered she, much surprised. "Never bought any? Why, a woman has just been here bringing a hundred eggs, saying she came on your behalf, and that they were paid for!"

On another occasion, when a new market had been opened, and was kept entirely by men, the Little Sisters were in much dismay, not being sure how they might be received by the new tenants. Seeing their hesitation as they stood outside, one of their former friends, who happened to be near, exclaimed, "Wait a minute, my good Sisters. Come with me, and you will be all right!" So saying, the excellent woman accompanied the two *quêteuses* to every stall, and explained to each occupant the object of the *quête*, insisting upon helping to carry the baskets herself, which were speedily filled, and the Sisters bidden to come back as often as they liked.

Woe betide, indeed, any individual of the male sex who should offer an insult to the Little Sisters in presence of their friends of the market! Did such a thing happen, he had the whole market down upon him, and soon found a rapid flight his sole chance of safety. A gentleman, a stranger to the work, who was one day watching with keenest interest the progress of a little donkey-cart along the quays of the river at Sèvres, beside which walked two Little Sisters, and listening to the joyous murmur of pleasure which seemed to run from one market-stall to another, whilst a perfect avalanche of leeks, onions, carrots, turnips, etc., were flung into the cart, and even bundles of linen and clothing lowered from upper windows by means of a string into the little vehicle as it passed slowly along, asked one of the givers what the scene meant, when she turned sharply upon him, and half in earnest, half in rough jest, replied in strong vernacular, "Is Monsieur a *mouchard* (a spy) by any chance?" Whereupon the good man, in spite of his excellent intentions, thought it more prudent to continue on his way, as he noticed signs that the hands which had been so lavish in the service of charity might be equally prompt in flinging potatoes and cabbage-stalks at his own head!

An old fish-wife, well known in a large sea-port town for the unparliamentary nature of her tongue, was stricken with paralysis in the midst of her busy

calling, and carried straight to the Home of her friends, the Little Sisters, whose baskets her hands had so often filled. Her gratitude for their loving care of her was beyond all words to describe, and the faintest syllable of grumbling or discontent against her dear Little Sisters, uttered in the dormitory where she lay, would provoke an outburst of indignation on her part; forgetting her impotent condition, she would seize hold of the stick at her side, and exclaim in the voice which used to ring through the markets, "Say what you like to me—I deserve anything—but just you dare breathe a word against my Little Sisters, and I will brain you!"

Over and over again the Little Sisters have had cause to bless the charity of the poor and of the working-classes in their behalf, and to admire the delicacy with which this charity has been rendered. A manufacturer in a large city once wrote to Père Le Pailleur, stating that he was under a deep personal obligation to him. "Formerly," ran the letter, "my men thought of nothing but attending socialistic meetings; now, since the arrival of the Little Sisters, these latter are the theme of the workshops, and nothing is talked of but their merits, their devotedness, and their requirements." Thus, when in a busy town of the north, Père Le Pailleur arrived to be present at the blessing of a new chapel, many artisans and mechanics attended the ceremony in order to

contemplate the founder of a Congregation which they admired so cordially, and could not take their eyes off his gentle, holy face, crowding round him as soon as the service was over, kissing his hands and his garments, and imploring him to bless them and their families. One of the employers of these men, a great benefactor to the House, observed afterwards to the Good-Father, "It is I, rather, who ought to bless and thank you, for before your Sisters came I was ignorant of God. They have taught me to know Him and to love Him. They have made me a Christian, and it is to you I owe it all!"

Soldiers, also, have invariably been kind friends to the Little Sisters wherever they have come in contact with them, and the cheery manners of the *quêteuses* find a ready way to the hearts of officers and privates alike. Sometimes it is a packet of tobacco they will club together to send the *petits vieux*, out of a fellow-feeling for these inveterate old smokers to whom a pipe is the last remaining joy of life; sometimes in passing the cart, two or three will give a helping hoist to the heavy cans under the weight of which a Little Sister is bending; sometimes they will even deprive themselves of their own rations of bread, and put these by for the Sisters, as for instance when a Good-Mother was warmly thanking a fine-looking young soldier one day, who regularly twice a week brought his portion to the Home, the latter replied, "One

makes so many sacrifices for one's own perdition, that I thought perhaps a little offering of this kind for the good of my soul might be pleasing to God." When the regiment was leaving the town, this soldier came to bid farewell to the Good-Mother, with whom he had become great friends, and said, "There is a talk of war, so pray hard for me. If I should happen to die, however, Monsieur ——, a lawyer, has instructions to give you my savings—three hundred francs—for your poor old people."

It happened once to come to the ears of an artillery officer that the wardrobe of the Little Sisters was in an extremely poverty-stricken condition, and that the two devoted little *quêteuses* whom he had met a long way out in the country, toiling along in muddy roads, with rain and sleet beating down upon them for a whole afternoon, had not even a second pair of stockings to put on when they got home. As soon as he heard this lamentable state of things, he sent a hundred francs to the Good-Mother, begging she would repair the deficiency—a good action which met with its own reward; this charity towards the Little Sisters being recompensed in the case of the officer in question, as in that of so many others, with the grace to become a devout Catholic, from having hitherto been absolutely indifferent in matters of religion.

When the first of the Lyons Houses was started,

one of the earliest and most important offerings received in that populous city was a sum voted out of their savings by the National Guard, and was quickly followed by a charitable donation on the part of the soldiers of the 42nd Line Regiment, who, at the proposal of their Colonel, put themselves down for ten "soups" per company, in favour of the Little Sisters. Later, when the regiment was under canvas at the camp of Sathonay, the Colonel wrote to the Good-Mother that it was with extreme regret he and his men were compelled to discontinue their offering of soup to the poor old people in consequence of the distance from the camp to the town, but that immediately on the regiment's return the soup would be given as before, and that the 3rd Battalion of Chasseurs, about to be garrisoned at Lyons, would follow their example in so good a work. Meanwhile, in order that the old people should not feel the regiment's absence too much, their Colonel begged to enclose a small offering to the Little Sisters' stock-pot, which offering was an order for fifty kilogrammes of meat.[1]

Amongst royal personages in almost every country, the Little Sisters have found good friends. Amongst their earlier patrons may be mentioned Napoleon III.

[1] It was at this House, during the inundations, that a Little Sister nearly lost her life in rescuing the donkey, the faithful companion of her *quêtes*, and was herself saved by an officer of the Engineers.

and the Empress Eugénie. In these days, when the glamour of the Imperial Court has faded away, and the faults and follies of the beautiful woman who exercised so fatal a sway stand out in stronger relief than her merits, when even her charitable visits to cholera-patients and her good works generally have been attributed to political motives, exception may be found in the unvarying interest which her Imperial Majesty took in the Little Sisters. The spirit of these latter being so essentially humble, little public glory could accrue from her kindness to them and her visits to their Homes. The House in the Faubourg St. Antoine owed its existence to her liberality, and great was the delight of the whole community when she and the Emperor deigned to pay them a visit. Their Majesties were received at the gate by a group of all the Sisters, a Good-Mother Assistant at their head, and the old people, attired in their very best, ranged in lines in the courtyard, waving their wrinkled, trembling hands, and crying at the pitch of their quavering voices, "Long live the Emperor! Long live the Empress!" Their Majesties knelt for a few moments in the chapel, long enough to note its holy poverty, whilst the Sisters and their old men intoned the *Domine salvum fac* with might and main, and then the Empress requested to be shown the kitchens, and the processes by which the broken victuals of the *quête* were converted into palatable food for so many

mouths, and finally she insisted on making a tour of the infirmaries, and saying a kind word as she passed, to every poor bed-ridden old creature whom illness or infirmities had prevented from joining the happy throng below; the Emperor meanwhile stopping to talk with the old men, and to one in particular, an old soldier, who gave him a proud and detailed account of the many campaigns in which he had served.[1]

The kindness of their Imperial Majesties to the Paris Houses emboldened the Little Sisters in another part of France to make an appeal to the Emperor's generosity. This was at Vannes in the year 1865, during a very hard winter, when the resources were at such a low ebb (consisting in all of forty-five centimes, or fourpence halfpenny), that for twelve days two Little Sisters and a band of their old men had been forced to go out daily into the woods and gather sticks for the kitchen-fire,[2] and when the range had become so utterly worthless that the Little Sister-

[1] When this House became too small for the increasing number of its pensioners, and was transferred to another locality, the Good-Mother had the happy thought of asking the Colonel of an artillery regiment quartered near to assist her in transporting her charges and household goods, who immediately, and in the most gracious manner possible, put thirty men and twelve military waggons at her disposal.

[2] At the expiration of these twelve days, Providence had pity on His children, and five cart-loads of wood were unexpectedly sent to the House by a benefactor who had heard of their distress.

cook had declared to her Good-Mother that it was positively impossible to cook a dinner upon it. At this moment a report went about that the Emperor was soon going to pass through Vannes on his way to the château of the Princess Bacciocchi. Accordingly the Good-Mother concocted a little petition (in very simple style, we may be sure) which she herself left at the Princess's château, and the following day she received a letter from the Princess, telling her that her request was granted, and that she must go to the railway-station, and thank the Emperor as he passed through. Very timid and very shy was the poor little Good-Mother as she made her way into the gaily decorated station, through a crowd of officials and functionaries, her humble black cloak making a singular contrast with all the dazzling uniforms. The Princess, however, was on the look-out for her, and taking her by the hand, led her up to the carriage, where was seated the Emperor, when she stammered a few words of thanks—she scarcely knew what—in the name of her aged charges and withdrew, blushing all over her face with pleasure at the kind words in which his Majesty told her how greatly he admired the work of the Little Sisters, and what pleasure it gave him to furnish so necessary an article as the kitchen-range in question, which range arrived shortly afterwards at the Home, and was the cause of many a fervent prayer for its imperial donor.

Amongst other crowned heads, friends of the Little Sisters, we may mention that our own Queen has always shown great interest in these devoted women and their establishments, both at home and abroad; indeed, the arrival of Queen Victoria is always hailed with delight on the Continent in any town where she may fix her spring residence, as, not only does she give a donation in money, but orders that all the remnants of food left at the end of the day shall be given to the Little Sisters, who call every morning at the royal residence. When her Majesty was at Biarritz, for instance, one March not long ago, so many and important were the *remains* that, during the month or six weeks of the Queen's stay, bread was the only article of food which had to be bought by the Little Sisters. As they remarked, "if her gracious Majesty were to remain for a year, they would soon have funds enough to pay off the debt upon house and grounds." In spite of living under a Republic, the presence of *la reine d'Angleterre* was an incessant topic of conversation amongst the old people, who were perpetually going to the windows overlooking the road, in hopes of seeing her Majesty drive past, and still more in the longing that her carriage might turn in at their own gates; and we were assured by several of them that their soups and stews tasted infinitely more savoury since they had been made from the remnants of the royal kitchen.

Perhaps it will not be deemed out of place by our readers if we close this chapter with one example chosen out of the many of a higher order of friendship which has never failed the Little Sisters. We speak of that of their holy Angel-Guardians, so frequently sent to their aid by Providence when human succour has been at fault. In a certain town situated in the west of France, the Good-Mother of the Home for the Aged found herself at the end of her resources; not only had she not one penny-piece in her possession, but on consulting her books, she found that on the morrow a bill for a hundred francs would fall due which she was in duty bound to pay.

Calling two of her Little Sisters (not the usual *quêteuses*) to her side, but without telling them to what straits she was reduced, she said to them: "You must go out now, and go from house to house wherever you think you will find the most generous benefactors; for remember this, you must not come in this evening without bringing a hundred francs in your pocket. Go, my children, and may God bless your exertions."

The two Little Sisters set forth without saying a word or even permitting themselves to wonder at their errand as they might have done, for the morning was already advanced, the snow was falling heavily, and the cold was intense. They walked throughout the livelong day, calling at first one house then at

another, but the days were short at this season, and as evening began to close in, they found themselves at the limits of the town, in a suburb, with nothing before them but the bare country, white with its snowy covering. Pausing for a moment, they stayed to count the money they had received, eighty francs. But the Good-Mother had bidden them bring her a hundred francs, and not to return without! They were twenty francs short. What should they do? They were tired out; their limbs were stiff with cold and fatigue, and there were no more houses at which to beg—nothing lay before them but a desolate, snowy waste.

"Let us go back," said the younger of the two. "We have done all we can do. There is no hope of our getting the sum required. Our Mother will not find fault with us."

And the poor Little Sister, her teeth chattering with cold, looked plaintively at her elder companion.

"No, Sister, we will not go back, indeed. Our Mother would not blame us, I know; but she told us to bring her a hundred francs, and not to return without them. Obedience lies there, let happen what may." And then she added, "Farther on, a few miles from here, there is a village where I know there are some charitable souls. Let us push on there. What have we to fear? We are at work for God and the poor."

And the brave little women struggled on, sinking ankle-deep in the snow, their eyes blinded and faces cut with the stinging blast; yet on they went, although tears rained down the cheeks of the younger one, who seemed at last about to drop from exhaustion.

At that moment, as they were passing a thorn tree white with its snowy mantle, a child suddenly stood before them, a boy of about ten years old with a sweet, winning face, who came quickly towards the two Little Sisters as they were toiling along in the middle of the road. And now he stops, makes them a gracious bow, and smiling, places a piece of money in the hand of the elder Sister, bows again, and disappears once more behind the thorn tree. This sudden apparition had lasted for a moment only, but had so astonished the two Little Sisters that they stood quite still without speaking a word, hardly understanding what had happened. Presently, however, they look at the money given them in so unexpected a manner. It is a *louis!* Twenty francs, exactly the sum they wanted. Overjoyed, they rush to the thorn tree, look behind it, round it, in it, in every direction, but no trace of the child, or even of footprints in the snow, is to be seen. Then the two holy little women fell upon their knees and thanked God from the bottom of their hearts, for no doubts had they of His having sent one of His

angels to them in their distress, to reward them for their obedience and their faith.

This touching anecdote was related by the Good-Mother herself whose command to her faithful children produced so consoling a manifestation of Providence.

CHAPTER XI.

ENGLAND—SCOTLAND—IRELAND.

THERE is perhaps no country in the world where philanthropists give so much in alms; where the wants of the poor are made matter for so much State legislation; where charitable institutions such as hospitals and asylums for every variety of ailment, mental or physical, with which human nature is afflicted, abound and thrive, supported as they are by the magnificent donations of the rich of every creed and calling, as in England. And yet there was no country, until the late Cardinal, then Provost, Manning brought the Institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor before the notice of Cardinal Wiseman, and that true lover of the poor introduced it into his diocese, in which the condition of the aged and destitute Catholic was more deplorable, compelled as he was to seek the shelter of the workhouse—a shelter which it is considered a stigma by the respectable poor to accept—where his faith stood in daily peril on account of the human respect which, in his frailty, often led him

to conceal the fact of his being a Catholic, where the practice of his religion was accompanied by difficulties (amongst which may be numbered a system of petty persecutions), and where his soul was deprived of the consolations so sorely needed in his declining years.

It was in 1851 that the first Foundation was made in London, at the appeal of Cardinal Wiseman, who, hearing of the miracles of charity accomplished by the Little Sisters, bethought himself of what an incalculable boon their presence would be in the midst of the poorer members of his own flock. Their installation he entrusted to Father Manning, who had seen them at work in France, had visited their Mother-House, and entertained the highest esteem for their venerable founder. Good-Mother Pauline, Assistant-General of the Congregation, a valiant Little Sister, who from the earliest days had been ever to the front, when difficulties had to be fought and obstacles conquered, was entrusted with the Foundation. The first great difficulty was to find a house, and the search took a considerable length of time. At the beginning, the Sisters occupied a small tenement in the Hammersmith Road, which, a few months later, the kindness of foreign benefactors enabled them to exchange for a larger one in the same district. The brave little squadron arrived on November 7th, and we may imagine that the first acquaintance

with the English capital, enveloped in its murky, winter atmosphere, would have been dismal enough to alarm and daunt the hearts of these merry little daughters of sunny France, had anything had power to dim their brightness of spirit! No sooner did they take possession than they set to bed-making, with a vigour which enabled them speedily to receive three old women, whom, when installed, the Cardinal came to visit and bless. The prelate was very ailing, and walking was most painful to him, but he insisted on visiting every corner of the house, and displayed a fatherly interest in the little colony which delighted the Sisters, and was hailed by them as a good omen of success in this their first venture in a Protestant land.

The *quête* was a matter of extreme difficulty at the beginning, and the Sisters were greatly perplexed how to set about it, as one only of their number knew a little English, and the population could not be expected to understand what they wanted without explanation. At first, moreover, they were afraid of applying to Protestants; and the Catholics being scattered broadcast, how were they to find these in this vast, unknown city? Besides all this, the religious habit was little known in London at this period, and the sight of it produced such consternation, that Catholic hotel-keepers were afraid of frightening away their clients were the Little Sisters

to be seen often coming to their doors. On the other hand, the destitution of their old women was absolute. What was to be done? So they struggled bravely along in the strange streets, holding out a piece of money in their hands, and saying, in broken English, to those whose charity they implored, "No money! many poor!" followed often by a troop of mischievous boys pointing and jeering at them, sometimes pelted, often coldly dismissed from the doors at which they ventured to knock, and finally returned home, weary and footsore, one evening, to be told that their proprietor had called to say that he found he had been shamefully deceived, that he had never thought of letting his property as a poor-house, that he should break the lease, and turn Sisters and old women, neck and crop, into the streets.

Hardly had this storm calmed down, when another broke over their heads. They were prosecuted by the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity, and brought up before a magistrate, who gave the case against them, but excused them for this first offence; warning them, however, that in case of repetition, a month's imprisonment would be the penalty. For a whole week the poor Little Sisters stayed indoors in dismay, a prey to the bitterest anxiety as to the future; for, without the *quête*, their work was annihilated. Providence, however, came to their rescue, and brought good out of evil, and

the seemingly untoward event turned to their advantage. Newspapers took the case up, and commented strongly on the absurdity of the sentence. "The Little Sisters of the Poor," they said, "are not mendicants in the sense understood by law; they beg for the indigent. Theirs is a public work, and there are hundreds of other charities in London which solicit alms in support of their good works." Several members of Parliament, some Catholic, some Protestant, took the matter up, and threatened to report the prosecution in higher quarters, and the result of all this stir was that the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity withdrew all interference with the Little Sisters thenceforth and for ever.

And now the *quête*, after its baptism of tribulation, took a new and wider development. The newspapers had made Protestants as well as Catholics acquainted with the work, and these, with the open-handedness innate with Englishmen of every creed, came forward spontaneously to help the devoted women who had settled in their midst for the sole purpose of tending and succouring their own English poor. Soon there was scarcely an hotel, scarcely an eating-house, scarcely a house of business, at which the *quêteuses* and their big cans were not welcome visitors. They grew so bold as to venture into the markets, in loving remembrance of their market-friends across the water, taking with them little printed notices of

their work and requirements, which they distributed as they went. At first their habit attracted an attention which was not always flattering, but the Sisters paid no heed to offensive remarks, and, indeed, rarely understood them; and, God's grace accompanying them, the little leaflets produced an effect far beyond anything they had dared to hope, and, in a very short time, Covent Garden, Leadenhall, and Smithfield rivalled the Paris markets in contributing to the nourishment of the Little Sisters' aged poor.

The five old women were soon joined by many more old people of both sexes, and the House at Hammersmith grew and prospered. A new trial was, however, in store for the Little Sisters, the like of which, we believe, has never befallen them elsewhere, namely, the separation from their body of a certain number of its members. It came about in this wise. Nazareth House, as the Home was called, had been bought (the land and the building) and paid for by a French lady, Madame Victoire Larmenier, who held certain views of her own about the work, which she desired should be extended to the care of incurable children; she also wished to make certain changes relative to money matters, deeming the absolute dependence upon the daily *quête* too precarious a mode of existence for a Community, etc. She contrived to inculcate these, her views, upon a certain

number of the Sisters, especially her unwillingness to accept various regulations incumbent on all true daughters of Père Le Pailleur.

The Little Sisters of the Poor, in their great charity, will never speak of these unhappy differences. Their affliction was great at being compelled to separate from those who had so lately been their faithful companions; but their respect for their Rule and Constitutions was unbounded, and took precedence of every other consideration. Therefore, with the consent of Cardinal Wiseman, they quitted the House so dear to them as the scene of their first arduous labours in a strange country, left it to the lady who had purchased it on their behalf, and bade farewell to the Sisters, who, under her guidance, took the name henceforth of Poor Sisters of Nazareth, and retained enough of the Rule, and even of the habit (adding merely a blue lining to the black cloak), of the Little Sisters of the Poor to mislead many from that date up to the present moment into believing them to be still a part of the main body.

This was in the year 1861. Again the Little Sisters found themselves face to face with the difficulty of procuring a suitable residence. Finally, through the energetic labours of Père Ernest Lelièvre, three houses adjoining each other, and separated from other buildings, were found in Sutherland Gardens, Maida Vale, which offered every advantage,

except that of a low rent. Here the Sisters established themselves with thirty old pensioners, and here the venerable founders found them when the latter came to pay them a visit and arrange for a second Foundation to be made on the other side of the Thames, at the earnest petition of the Bishop of Southwark (Dr. Grant).

Père Le Pailleur, perceiving that the resources of the Houses would never suffice to cover the heavy rents demanded, came to the decision, with his usual trust in Providence, that in so important a city as London it was incumbent on the Little Family to reside on their own territory, and that to do this they must build Houses of a nature suited to the vast work which he foresaw would be theirs. He accordingly inspected two plots of ground which seemed to him to combine all necessary requirements, and assured his daughters and their well-wishers that they need have no fears, that God, Who had hitherto assisted the Little Family in so signal a manner, would not fail them in England, and that they would see that every obstacle which they most dreaded would be removed from their path. Truly enough, shortly after the Good-Father General's return to France, the Little Sisters succeeded in making the acquisition of one of these plots of ground, and the other was obtained on their behalf a few months later by the exertions of a lawyer, a Protestant, who absolutely refused any

remuneration for his good offices. Accordingly, in the year 1864, the Sisters took possession of the property now so well known as St. Joseph's Home, Portobello Road, Notting Hill. This property went by the name of Portobello Farm, there being no other buildings near it. Cattle grazed all around on the adjoining lands. No road led up to it except the rough cart-track leading to the farmstead, in the buildings of which the Sisters took up their quarters, and, indeed, remained there long after they had established their old people in the commodious dormitories of the spacious Home, which now, instead of standing in a rural district, is faced by a large Franciscan convent built upon the other side of the broad macadamized road which replaces the ploughed fields of bygone days, the gardens of the two Institutions being the only open ground now left as breathing-space in the densely populated suburb, where convents, schools and chapels, of every size and description, attest the spread and growth of the Catholic Church and the energetic charity of her members. This House now contains about three hundred aged men and women, and when Père Ernest Marie, who was its first chaplain, left England, was put under the care of the Oblate Fathers of St. Charles, who have ever since shown the utmost kindness and devotion to the good Sisters.

The Foundation at Southwark was made in the

same year, in a small house adjoining the New Kent Road, where the Sisters had barely accommodation for three or four old women, their little parlour being made into a chapel, and they themselves sleeping in a garret which might more properly have been termed a hole in the roof. Here the *quête* offered even greater difficulties than did that of the first Foundation, the distances which the Sisters had to walk being longer and occasioning immense fatigue, their chief benefactors living at Greenwich, Roehampton, and Clapham—places many miles apart, thus entailing hours of walking, the arduousness of which was increased by their having in these early days to carry all the food, old clothing, etc., which they received, in bags slung from their arms. Later on, the Sisters moved to the Fentiman Road, South Lambeth, where the building now known as St. Peter's Home (which contains nearly three hundred inmates) was almost entirely due to the exertions and influence of Père Ernest Lelièvre. This rapid extension of the work of the Little Sisters was marked, as usual, by heavy trials, the Good-Mothers of both London Houses being stricken at one and the same time with typhoid fever of a malignant type. Both received the Last Sacraments within eight days the one of the other, and both lingered on for weeks in an apparently hopeless condition, till finally the prayers of their afflicted daughters, and of the poor old creatures harboured

within their walls, obtained mercy with God and a complete restoration to health in both cases.

There were days when the Homes were reduced to the verge of destitution; but just when even to pay the bread-bill seemed to be an impossibility, an unexpected donation would arrive; succour from France, or a visitor who, touched at the sight of the joy and peace written on the faces of the old pensioners, would inquire into the financial state of affairs, and contribute a large share towards supplying deficiencies and maintaining the motley gathering of English, Irish, German, Catholic, and Protestant old folks, all living together in harmony and presenting as many varieties of national character as of ailments and infirmities.

A third Home was started in London by the indefatigable Little Sisters in 1875, under the patronage of St. Anne. Its beginnings were as humble as those of its forerunners, in a little one-storied house in the Queen's Road, Dalston, where the first offering made to the Good Sisters was some window-blinds; where they possessed neither tables nor chairs, and utilized in place of the former their collecting-cans turned upside down, when these were not in active service. In this house, where the walls ran down with moisture, the Sisters suffered much from damp, from the exiguity of the premises, and from want of pure air. Great, therefore, was their joy when the liberality of friends and benefactors enabled them to

build and open a new Home at Stoke Newington where they now maintain over two hundred poor.

Manchester was the next town in England which claimed the presence of the Little Sisters. In a manufacturing centre containing a population of more than fifty thousand souls, the number of destitute poor was almost incalculable. A rich merchant from the north of France, whose business called him frequently to this city, spoke one day of the good work the Sisters were doing in London, to the secretary of the Bishop of Salford, who, in his turn, related all the touching anecdotes he had heard to his Bishop. At that time the cotton-trade was very slack in Lancashire in consequence of the American War, and it seemed hardly the moment for a new enterprise. "Let the Sisters come," said the Bishop, nevertheless, "if they are not afraid. Poor there are in abundance. I promise to give them all the remains of my table and a shilling a week, together with my best wishes for their success." The Little Sisters arrived, therefore, under the escort of the indefatigable Good-Mother Pauline, and took possession of a small house which had been rented for them, and which, to their surprise, they found clean and tidy, with a good fire burning in the grate, a table spread with plates, dishes, and viands, and, what was more, chairs instead of the bare walls usual in other Foundations! These unwonted luxuries were a surprise provided for

the Good Sisters by the first old woman who had been anxiously awaiting their arrival. Aged ninety though she was, she had gone from neighbour to neighbour in her joy at the prospect of having a home for her declining years, and had put each and all under contribution, to make a welcoming Feast. More than ten persons had united in providing the furniture of the dining-room, whilst the bed, table, and chairs of the sleeping apartment were her own property, which she gave, together with herself. Two Irish charwomen had helped her to clean out the house, which had stood unoccupied for at least two years. In course of the first day the Bishop arrived with his secretary, bringing the Little Sisters a great boon—the wherewithal to fit up a chapel, namely, an altar, tabernacle, benches, and even vestments and altar-linen; so that, as they themselves had brought the necessary sacred vessels, Holy Mass was able to be said on the third day after their arrival. A week had not elapsed when the number of the old women had increased to six. Here, as in London, only one Little Sister knew a few words of English, and here, again, the *quête* went through many a critical phase. The poor little *quêteuses* were stared at and followed whenever they showed themselves in the streets, and more than a hundred loafers would post themselves from morning till night outside the little Home, in order to catch a glimpse of the "French nuns." In spite of all the kind exertions

of the bishop, resources were so scanty in these early days that unless help had been sent from France the Sisters would have been reduced to want many and many a time, until finally an hour came when the tide turned in their favour, and as they and their work became known, the townsfolk of Manchester proved as generous to them as were those of the metropolis.

After a few years, came the question of buying a piece of ground on which to build. The Little Sisters had as usual no resources in view; but confident in Providence, they made application to a benefactor in France; the money was forthcoming, and the property was purchased—an old house standing in a large garden, suitable in every way. And now arose a second necessity, that of building. For this project the inhabitants of Manchester came forward spontaneously. There were some amongst them who had known the Little Sisters at Nice, Pau, and other places, and spoke warmly on their behalf. Sectarian prejudices melted away, and Protestants joined with Catholics in organizing a bazaar to assist in defraying the expenses, which bazaar succeeded beyond all expectation, and covered the whole sum requisite. At the same time, a benefactor presented a horse and cart to the little household; but as demands for admission increased on every side, and as the resources of the Home grew in bulk, so did this cart

become too small for its loads, and the horse too feeble for its lengthened journeys. The benefactor, therefore, who had given the first cart thought he could not do better than provide a second of larger dimensions, a stronger horse and complete set of harness—which he accordingly did, and declared that his purse was in no wise reduced by this second donation, but the reverse.

Bristol, Birmingham, Plymouth, and Leeds were the next towns to follow the example of Manchester in requesting the Little Sisters to come and tend their aged poor, appeals which were invariably responded to, and which brought many a hardship and many a trial in their wake. At Bristol the sight of the religious habit not only produced consternation, but the people fled at the approach of the Sisters, mistaking them for the ghosts of the dead!

In large towns, especially where there is a great manufacturing population (and more especially where the joyfully tendered penny of the Irish workman is a sure resource, and brings a blessing with it), the Houses begun in privation and anxiety have invariably developed into large and thriving establishments; but in places such as Bristol, Carlisle, Brighton (the latter especially), it has been a continual struggle with want up to this day. Where the resources of the daily *quête* barely suffice for daily bread, nothing is left for aught besides, and we all know that every

residence needs a certain outlay from time to time, roofs require mending, necessary implements for indoor and outdoor labour want renewing, etc.; in fact, there are a hundred little incidental expenses which seem trifles in themselves, but which mount up in the course of the year, and which are hard, not to say impossible, to meet in towns where the Little Sisters never know what it is to have an extra shilling or two—such as are providentially provided in some places by such things as a charity sermon, a legacy, a concert or bazaar on their behalf. In all the world, except perhaps in some of the smaller towns of Spain, where inundations and famine have reduced the population to such straits that they are themselves starving, and have nothing left to give, there is no House of Little Sisters so poor as that of Brighton—poor to the degree of the Sisters themselves knowing to this day the meaning of the word hunger.

And yet Brighton is a town frequented by rich people and pleasure-seekers of every kind and class, who we feel sure are unaware of the difficulties against which the devoted Little Sisters have to contend during the months when the esplanades and piers are deserted, and who, if these lines should fall under their eyes, will perhaps contrive a visit to the Home with their other excursions, and leave a substantial remembrance of their sojourn by the sea in the hands of these humble workers, who toil and beg the live-

long day in order to maintain those who can work for themselves no longer.

To return to the earlier Foundations. The origin of a Home at Birmingham was a *quête* which the Sisters made in that town, when instead of receiving authorization to beg only, they were met by a request to make a Foundation—a Foundation which differed from its predecessors in that it was the first which was able to start and to subsist without help from France. This was not accomplished in a day, however, or without labour. There was scarcely an inch of ground in the Black Country, even to the Potteries, over which the Good-Mother, accompanied by a Little Sister, did not trudge, day by day for month after month, at the cost of countless rebuffs and humiliations, holding out her hand to all, rich and poor, and distributing her little printed papers as she went. The result of this almost superhuman toil was invariably the awakening of a deep interest in the work and a tender veneration for the holy women who spent their lives in succouring the outcasts of society. All classes vied with each other in showering gifts and tokens of sympathy upon the Institution which they had learned to value and to love. Sometimes it was a vendor of brooms who would bring a collection of his wares; another time a travelling potter who would fill the lodge with crockery; now a recent convert who sent carriages to the Home

with injunctions to bring Little Sisters and old people out to her country seat, where a festive meal was spread awaiting them on the lawn; now a tradesman who, finding that the Sisters possessed no clock, supplied the deficiency; again, a wealthy inhabitant, who put his fields at the disposition of the Little Sisters' cows, and so on. Innumerable are the traits of kindness and generosity which might be cited.

A positive event in the annals of the British Foundations was that of Glasgow, in the year 1862, made in the heart of rigorous Puritanism, where, with many of the inhabitants, the very name of Papist was synonymous with every abomination.

It was on a bitterly cold night that a detachment of Little Sisters arrived in Glasgow, sent straight from La Tour. The railway station was to all appearance deserted, not a fly even was to be seen outside. As one of the Sisters wrote describing their arrival: "After a great deal of hunting about, we found a man, who finally consented to carry our box to the Convent of Franciscan nuns, with whom we were to stay whilst looking for a house of our own. This house when found—the memory of which will be ever dear to us—was much too small, and had formerly been a public-house. On the ground floor was a shop, on the first a restaurant, and we lodged on the second and third floors. The staircase was so dark that visitors who came to see us had not the courage to

ascend it, and generally turned back, not thinking it possible that a Community could inhabit such a place. Nevertheless, we remained there for two years. The kitchen served alike as wash-house and drying-ground. Impossible to set foot outside the door or even to go to the windows to get a breath of air without being smothered by the smoke from many factory chimneys, or else encountering the curious gaze of a dozen pairs of eyes, our house being at the corner of four streets. Our trials were, however, more than compensated by the universal tokens of sympathy which we received from both Catholics and Protestants, who sent us gifts of money and kind on every side. The inhabitants of Glasgow were not accustomed to see the religious habit in their streets, and crowded round us the first day we went out, asking each other what manner of people wore such an extraordinary costume. The children followed us at a distance all over the place, and the grown-up people stood still open-mouthed at the sight of us, or walked backwards the better to examine us. Providence, however, sent us a novel kind of protector, who rendered us real service during a few weeks. This was a poor idiot of thirty years of age, who constituted himself our guardian, and whenever the Little Sisters went out, met them with a low bow and followed them gravely, stick in hand. Woe to any urchin whom curiosity brought too close to us; his

back smarting under a thud from the stick, soon reduced him to respect. And not only was this the case with street boys; our guardian did not make any distinction of persons, so that one day, as we were making the tour of the markets, a well-dressed lady, who apparently was scrutinizing us too closely for the liking of our Argus, was vastly astonished at receiving a sharp blow of the stick upon her bonnet!"

An ecclesiastic who rendered great services to the Little Sisters in their Scotch Foundations, writes of them that nowhere were their steps strewn with hardships and sacrifices in a greater degree than in Glasgow, Dundee, and Edinburgh. "Trials of every kind were their daily food," he says, "of which their ignorance of the language, great as it was, was the least. Their spiritual privations were extreme, owing to the lack of priests in these head-centres of Calvinism. In Dundee the Sisters were even compelled to bury one of their old women with their own hands, digging her grave themselves, and reciting over her the only prayers she was able to receive."

A greater sorrow, still, befell the little Community in these early Glasgow days, that of losing their Good-Mother, who, worn out with the excessive labours of the Foundations, and her constitution undermined by the want of air in a house where the Little Sisters would jokingly say they became mildewed like the walls, was the first of their number to lay down her

life in a Protestant land. Her successor had scarcely taken up the reins of government, when a species of conspiracy broke out amongst her old men, which caused her to pass many an anxious moment, two of them leaving the Home and demanding £2 10*s.*, which they averred to have given into the care of the Good-Mother on their arrival a year previously. This demand they made through the Law Courts, accompanying it with every sort of odious accusation against their benefactresses. Very uneasy were the Little Sisters, as they knew too well all that poor defenceless religious might have to expect at the hands of an ill-disposed judge, besides which, one or two of the old men in the Home declared that they were ready to go and give evidence in favour of their late comrades. The case was to be brought up for trial on a certain Monday at eleven o'clock, and the Court was filled to overflowing. The Good-Mother, on her knees in prayer, awaited the issue in a neighbouring house. When the hour arrived, instead of the complainant came a letter, in which he declared that he had grossly calumniated the Sisters; that he had listened to evil counsellors, that the Home was excellent, that he deeply deplored having quitted it, and that he hoped that by making this public retractation he might obtain his pardon; upon which judges, jury, and public vied with each other in testifying their sympathy towards the Little Sisters.

The Edinburgh House was opened in the year 1863, and its commencement marked by trials and corresponding graces similar to those of its predecessors. The *quête* here offered even greater difficulties than in either Glasgow or Dundee. For a long time placards were posted up in different parts of the city, warning any inhabitant against receiving the Little Sisters within their doors—the "begging nuns," as they termed them—under the pain of harbouring Antichrist in their persons, and various texts of Scripture were appended to this notice. The *quêteuses* were perpetually pelted with stones, one of them being severely wounded in the head on one occasion, another knocked down and so maltreated that she subsequently died of the injuries received; and one day, to save them from the fanatical fury of the inhabitants of a neighbouring village, a gentleman was forced to go to their rescue, and put them into the train for Edinburgh as quickly as possible. Another time they were blockaded for several hours in a house, whence they only made their escape by the intervention of the police, who, calling a cab, and joining hands and making a barrier of their persons from the door of the house to the carriage, enabled the Little Sisters to get safely away.

Sometimes when making their rounds, they would be ushered by the servants into the drawing-room, where, after the lady of the house had begged them to

be seated, she took the opportunity of making a tirade of abuse against themselves and their religion. They were preached against from the pulpits; pamphlets were distributed against them broadcast in the streets, so that for a year they had no peace. Finally the press took up their cause. Article after article appeared in the leading newspapers describing the Little Sisters and their work, and as the truth became known, sectarianism was reduced to silence, and brighter days dawned for the valiant little Community.

The first Foundation in Ireland was made in the year 1868, at Waterford, notwithstanding that for several years past, Limerick, Cork, Belfast, and Dublin had made urgent appeals for the opening of a Home in their midst.

The reception of the Sisters in Catholic Ireland needs hardly to be told, so sure were they of a hearty, generous welcome. Scarcely had they set foot in the residence assigned for them, than they were surprised and delighted at finding the large number of aged poor anxiously awaiting admittance. The Good-Mother Assistant who went to install her little colony, wrote thence, "I have nothing but good news to give of our little Foundation. . . . Our first old woman is said to be a hundred years old. She arrived without a shoe or a stocking to her foot, clothed in a few rags which barely served to cover her; never was misery more complete. The second to appear was in

little better plight. We had no bed to give her, but she thought herself very lucky to get a mattress laid upon the floor. Both the old dears are as good as gold, and say they are as happy as queens. . . . A good benefactor has just sent us I do not know how many yards of linen, and no present could be more acceptable, for never did I see poor people in such a state of nakedness and destitution as these in Ireland! We have hardly yet begun to go out and beg, for everything we can possibly want has been sent us by our kind neighbour. Not a day passes that this good lady does not divine our wants, and she says that she never even knows that she has given us anything, God always makes it good! See how kind Providence is to us! We are quite spoiled children, and know not how to render thanks for all the blessings we receive. We can only say, 'O God, how good Thou art!' Indeed, the few details which I have given you are nothing compared to all that is being done for us."

Other Foundations have since been made in Ireland, and all have met with the utmost sympathy and encouragement from the very outset, from the highest to the lowliest in the land. We will conclude this chapter, in which so many painful episodes of days of trial and hardship have found their place, with the account of a bright and festive scene in which the good Little Sisters were called upon to play a part, together with their beloved old charges.

It was in March, 1887. The Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland at that time was the Earl of Aberdeen. His wife, the Countess of Aberdeen, greatly interested in all charitable Institutions, visited the Home for Aged Poor in Dublin one fine day, expressed herself delighted with all she saw, and declared her intention of returning. For a long, long time the Little Sisters heard no more of her ladyship, when one day a missive arrived from the Viceregal Lodge, duly signed and sealed, in which the Lord-Lieutenant invited the Little Sisters of the Poor and their aged charges to a "tea-party" at his residence in Phœnix Park.

When the first moment of astonishment was over, the Little Sisters decided to accept his Lordship's invitation, which was, moreover, for an hour eminently convenient to them—three o'clock in the afternoon. On the day appointed, therefore, a little caravan prepared to set forth from Kilmainham to Phœnix Park, consisting of six or seven of the Little Sisters who could best be spared from the work of the House, and ninety of their old men and women, all of them in their best Sunday attire, and highly delighted at the pleasure-trip before them. At that moment, a line of vehicles appeared in the street in front of the Home, sent by the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Commander-in-Chief of the forces quartered in Ireland, with an escort of soldiers, in order to convey the Lord-Lieutenant's guests to their tea-party. The old people

comfortably installed, their Sisters by their side, the carriages drove off with their escort of soldiery, an unwonted spectacle in the streets of Dublin, where they were cheered by a delighted crowd of spectators who had hurried up to see the sight; whilst the old folks sat up very straight and dignified, as if to do honour to their exalted position, whence, if they caught sight of an acquaintance, they honoured him by a condescending bow.

Lord and Lady Aberdeen were standing waiting to receive their guests under the trees at the entrance to the Viceregal Lodge, and no sooner did the latter appear than they went forward to welcome them, shaking hands with each old man and old woman, and ushered them into a large hall, in which were gathered together all the highest dignitaries of the Viceregal Court, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, a Catholic Bishop, several ecclesiastics, the French Consul and his wife, and many fashionable Dublin ladies. The delighted old people were now seated at a long table covered with good things of every description—a superb dinner, indeed, rather than a tea—which they speedily began to attack as composedly as if they were in their own quiet refectory at Kilmainham, not in the least disturbed at being served by all the highest personages in the land. At the end of the meal, one of the old men stood up to offer the thanks of himself and comrades in terms so graceful that Lord Aberdeen,

visibly touched, replied that he wished it were in his power to help all the poor in Ireland; but that, finding that impossible, he was proud and happy to do honour to the aged men and women sheltered and tended in Dublin by the Little Sisters of the Poor, "those great friends of humanity."

The speechifying at an end, the old people were invited to take a walk in the grounds, where the various ladies and gentlemen joined them to have a chat. The old women, charmed at the interest their gay shawls and brightly be-ribboned caps excited, chatter away merrily, when suddenly old men and old women perceive that their Little Sisters are not with them! Great is their consternation, until they are reassured by hearing that Lord Aberdeen, recollecting that Little Sisters have bodies capable of exhaustion as well as old people, is taking care of them, and has kept them back to give them a cup of tea and some biscuits. And now the happy old guests are conducted back into the banqueting-hall, where a new enchantment awaits them, as they find it transformed into a brilliantly lighted ball-room, with a military band playing airs of the most exhilarating nature. The Lord-Lieutenant asks them if they will do him the pleasure of having a dance; they accept with delight, and Lady Aberdeen leads the way in a country dance with the old man who had made the speech, and her example is speedily followed

by the whole assembly; after which jig follows jig, and the dances succeed one another without a pause until seven o'clock strikes. It is getting late for these good old souls, and so the Little Sisters and their charges take their leave, accompanied to the Lodge gates by Lord and Lady Aberdeen, with their little son of eight years old, who have a kind word for every old man and woman, as they shake hands with each individual before he or she is helped up into the carriages, and set forth on the homeward journey under military escort as before. As the aged guests look back at the hospitable residence, hurrahs are shouted, hands and handkerchiefs are waved at them, and they notice that all the windows are decorated with flags—"just as if we had been royalty," exclaimed the delighted old souls, in whose memory this fairy-like entertainment will live for ever.

CHAPTER XII.

BELGIUM AND SWITZERLAND.

BELGIUM was the next foreign land for which a detachment of Little Sisters started on their holy quest of aged indigence, a country which, small though it be, is yet so large hearted—if we may use the expression—with regard to everything Catholic that the welcome they would receive left small matter for conjecture. The work was now known and appreciated in a manner differing vastly from the days when it had but just sprung into being in a remote corner of France.

Liège was the first town to which the Little Sisters, accompanied by a Good-Mother Assistant, directed their steps, at the summons of a worthy Canon of that town, in the year 1853.

At the moment of their arrival, a large property—formerly a Cistercian convent—was about to be sold, which the Canon hoped to secure for the new Institution. The Little Sisters, however, faithful to their rules, would not hear of the purchase being made until they should have received their authorization

from the civil as well as the ecclesiastical authorities. The sale therefore took place, and, much to the chagrin of the good Canon, the property was bought by a wealthy inhabitant of the place. On the following day the Little Sisters made a few visits, and were received on all sides with open arms, every one entreating them to take up their abode in Liège, where, it being a manufacturing town, the number of workingmen who fell into misery, destitution, and neglect as they grew old and incapable, was exceptionally great. The question was to find a house. The Little Sisters went up and down the town, and visited many, including the property just sold. During her inspection of the latter, the Good-Mother kept repeating, "It is the Chartreuse we want, it would suit us so well." Presently, seeing a hollow in one of the trees in an avenue of limes under which they were walking, she touched it, and exclaimed, "Oh, good St. Joseph! if you will give us this Chartreuse, I will put up a lovely statue in your honour on this very spot!" Faith such as that of the Little Sisters works miracles, and a visit was accordingly made to the recent purchaser, who, when he heard the meritorious purpose for which this property was desired, generously consented to forego his purchase, and pass it over to the Little Sisters at the price which he had paid for it, a sum which the charitable inhabitants of the town clubbed together to defray.

On June 13, the Little Sisters therefore entered into possession; three days later, the first happy old pensioners were received, and St. Joseph was enthroned in his lime tree, and the Bishop arrived, accompanied by many of the notabilities of the town, to give his blessing to the Sisters, and encourage them in the beginning of their splendid work, who, when he was about to take his leave, put a Life of another great friend of the poor into the Good-Mother's hand—that of St. John of God—saying, "There is a picture for you within the leaves." The picture was a bank-note for a hundred francs!

Scarcely had the House been started when a kind-hearted tradesman was heard to remark, "It is a shame those poor, good Little Sisters should toil up that hill every day, carrying their heavy baskets. I have a mind to go and offer them the four feet of a strong donkey." "Well, then," rejoined the person to whom the speech was made, "if you do, I will add the two wheels of a cart!" And thus, thanks to the good will of the entire population—a good will which has never slackened as the years have rolled on—and their many gifts in money and kind, the Home speedily grew and developed into a large establishment, of which the excellent Bishop (when he came to confirm several of the old people, who, until their reception into that blessed haven, had never even made their First Communion) observed in his allo-

cution, "People talk of miracles, but can there be a greater miracle than the one which is daily being renewed before our eyes, when we see such a number of poor creatures clothed, fed, and maintained without any assured source of revenue, without any stated help from the authorities of this world, dependent upon Providence alone?"

Brussels was not long in following the example of Liège, and, in less than a year, encouraged by the protection of the Papal Nuncio, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Mechlin, and H.R.H. the Duchess of Brabant (now Queen of the Belgians), a second band of devoted Little Sisters left the Tour St. Joseph for that city. Public charity undertook the acquisition of a suitable piece of ground, and likewise the building of a house capable of containing two hundred and fifty old people, during which time the Little Sisters were lodged in some old barracks.

In the capital, as elsewhere, many providential incidents marked the early days, and as usual, the little donkey, that inseparable and most precious coadjutor of all the Houses, played an important part. So heavy, indeed, were the loads with which charity filled his cart, and so weakly was he, owing to his great age, that the *quêteuse* rarely managed to get back in time for the midday meal of the old people, so the Good-Mother, aware of the ardent faith of this Little Sister, said to her one morning as she and her

poor old donkey were setting forth, "Now, mind you don't come back without bringing me a new donkey, or, at any rate, the promise of one!" The Little Sister in question had no earthly means in view by which to obtain the coveted quadruped, but never for a moment did she dream of disobeying her Good-Mother; so she started away on her rounds as usual, praying with all her might, and feeling quite sure that Providence would help her. As she prayed, the bright thought struck her of asking no less a person than the King to give her a donkey! His Majesty was at Laeken, and the difficulty was how to obtain an audience. She therefore had recourse to a lady in whom she had full confidence, and entrusted her with the commission. So well did this lady acquit herself of her task, that his Majesty there and then ordered his Controller to find a good strong ass for the Little Sisters without delay. When the Little Sister *quêteuse* returned to the Home in the evening, she bade the Good-Mother have no fears, but rest assured that her orders would be executed, and in course of a very few days a fine young donkey, as tractable as he was sturdy, arrived at the House on behalf of his Majesty the King; moreover, at the death of this animal, the Duke d'Arenberg, hearing of the misfortune, himself brought them a second donkey, whose days were, luckily, longer than those of his predecessor.

After the difficulties attending all the Foundations in France and elsewhere, it is consoling to hear of the charitable spirit which welcomed the Little Family in Belgium. From Sovereign to workman, from wealthy manufacturer to the smallest tradesman, all vied with each other in showing kindness and generosity to the heroic women who had left home and friends and country to come and succour their poor. The beauty as well as the merits of the work appealed to every heart, and soon it was not only Liège and Brussels, but Louvain, Jemmapes, Bruges, Namur, Antwerp, Ostend, Ghent, and Charleroi, which sought for the honour of a Foundation of Little Sisters to take charge of their aged poor.

Jemmapes seems to have been the only place in which the work encountered some hostility at its commencement, in consequence of false and mischievous stories which had been circulated; this state of things was not of long duration, however, and the Little Sisters, when passing by a house where they had been badly received on a former occasion, were implored to enter by its inmates, who added, "We shut our door in your faces once, but now we wish to ask your pardon, for we know it was to Almighty God we did it."

The working-classes of this town being almost entirely miners and colliers, the destitution is immense; these men being worn out before their time

by the nature of their occupations and by the abuse of strong drinks, and, having for the most part lived without a thought of God, the condition of their souls is even more forlorn than that of their bodies. Thus, the work of the Little Sisters was perhaps actually more needed there than in any other town in Belgium. Whatever the antecedents of their poor old pensioners, the Sisters invariably found them docile and obedient, most grateful for the loving care bestowed on them, and peaceable and contented amongst themselves. In fact, the *bonne entente* amongst the Belgian old people is still continual matter for rejoicing to the Little Sisters; such not being the case everywhere else, as in certain Houses which we could name, so desperately do the old women quarrel that they can never be left without a Sister within hearing, elderly dames of seventy and eighty years of age having been known even to come to blows together.

The markets, as usual, are a great source of revenue to the Little Sisters, who, at first, were not a little doubtful as to the reception which they might meet with, considering that they understood not a word of Flemish, and the country-people rarely knew any French. One day (this was at Louvain) they had received very little, and were rather shy about returning; however, scarcely had the humble black cloaks made their appearance than one of the women, who could speak a little French, came towards them as

interpreter for several others who followed at her heels, saying, "Come, Sisters, come quickly! God has punished us well for giving you nothing last time. We haven't sold anything all this week past." And then from every side gifts were showered into basket, bag, and apron.[1]

Again, a barber, who was too poor to give anything in money or kind, offered his services on behalf of the old men, which, needless to say, were thankfully received (notwithstanding that the Little Sisters have learnt the art of shaving, as, indeed, every other avocation connected with the care of poor humanity), and very proud was the excellent man of his clients, declaring that never did his shop thrive as it had done since he received the latter's custom.

Talking of custom, an old woman of eighty-five was brought in one day literally eaten away by the vermin which swarmed about her, and her nakedness covered by a few filthy rags only. There was not an article of clothing left in the *vestiaire*.[2] So the Little Sister in charge advised the old woman to address herself to St. Joseph. "Oh, I know nothing

[1] In the same town, a young priest was about to start for the Foreign Missions; he had given away everything he possessed except his cloak and *soutane*. Ringing at the bell of the Home, he said to himself, "My good God had not two coats," and so he left his cloak in the hands of the portress to serve as covering for the limbs of some poor old man.

[2] Wardrobe.

about him," replied she. However, she began to pray with all the fervour which her condition inspired, and a few hours later a charitable individual left a parcel at the door containing dress, shawl, etc.—all, in fact, that she needed in the way of clothing. The poor old thing jumped and danced about, laughing and crying for joy. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "I knew that Our Lady worked miracles, but as for St. Joseph, I never knew anything about him. Henceforth, as he is so kind, I shall give him all my custom." She was true to her word, and never in vain.

Switzerland was the next distant country to which the brave Little Sisters carried their tents, regardless of the trials and hostilities which they might encounter on a soil so imbued with the spirit of Calvin and Rousseau. Placing their undertaking under the sheltering wing of St. Michael, they trusted to the great Archangel to fight their battles, and began by opening a House at Geneva. Over and over again they were on the point of being expelled, but they held steadily on their way, opposing their humility, their modesty, and their invariable serenity and good humour to all susceptibilities and animosities, and, as usual, winning all hearts by patience, if not taking them, as elsewhere, by storm. Their humiliations were many, but, as one of them remarked, "We love our old people all the better when they have cost us a little suffering, like the mother who loves

best the child who has given her the most trouble." On one occasion they were put into prison for want of a necessary authorization for begging in the country districts, and remained captive for seven hours, until a telegram came from the Sub-Prefect ordering their release, when their only regret was that the day had been fruitless as regarded the *quête*—a regret, however, which a benefactor hastened to soften by sending them a cargo of sugar, rice, coffee, and other provisions.

The habits of the Swiss, their very way of living, etc., seemed to render the work of the Little Sisters impossible—the daily *quête* especially. The Catholics, however, were extremely fervent and devout, and greatly desired to keep the latter in their midst. The clergy, headed by the hierarchy, encouraged them by every possible means, and even some of the civil authorities were glad to place poor of their own under the Sisters' care, whilst the poor old souls for whom the Institution had been opened asked no better than to end their days within its hospitable walls.

In no other country, perhaps, had the aged pensioners appeared to appreciate more thoroughly the happiness of these their last years. They loved their large sunny house at Carouge, an ancient Catholic parish, annexed to Geneva in 1815; they were quite certain that no garden could equal their garden, cultivated by their own hands; they were sure

that no cows were ever so fine or gave so much milk as their cows; they were proud and happy when they could render the smallest service to their dear Little Sisters; proud to live under the government of such gentle, tender Mothers, and happy to die in the arms of the latter, prepared by them to meet their God Whom they had forgotten for so many a year. Above all, great was their joy when their own Bishop, Monseigneur Mermillod, the Vicar-Apostolic, flying from the glories and triumphs of a Cathedral pulpit, would come amongst them and talk of the things of God in language suited to their intelligence, to these his aged, loving, and admiring children, many of whom could remember the day when this illustrious prelate was still "little Gaspard," trotting along by his mother's side in the streets of Carouge; and was their great delight when he gathered them round him, calling them by their names with that charm of manner peculiar to himself, and, reminding them of the various events of their past lives, encouraged them to relate their reminiscences of his own childhood.

The time of all others which Monseigneur Mermillod liked to spend at the Carouge House was the Feast of Christmas. He loved to say his Midnight Mass in the humble chapel, which he was wont to liken to a living picture of Bethlehem, as indeed it was. Its centre, the holy

Infant Jesus in His plain wooden Tabernacle-cradle; near it the first-called worshippers, some poor shepherds, represented by the aged men and women poorer, indeed, than even the shepherds; as, like the Infant Whom they were adoring, they had had no home on the face of the earth until they were given shelter, food, and raiment under the shadow of the Blessed Sacrament by the holy women whose lives of prayer, work, and nearness to God may be said to be a perpetual reproduction of those of Mary and Joseph when ministering to the wants of the Divine Child. On these occasions the little chapel, formerly the drawing-room of the residence—a large room with richly sculptured panels and decorated ceiling dating from the eighteenth century—was brilliantly lit up; the old people, attired in their very best, with faces as shining with happiness as with cleanliness, were ranged on either side, whilst their cracked, quavering voices mingled with the fresh young tones of the Little Sisters as canticle after canticle was sung. Monseigneur said a few touching words in a voice which even the deafest ear could catch, and all received Holy Communion. When Mass was over, the tender thoughtfulness of the Little Sisters provided supper for their beloved old charges. Tables were spread, laid with white cloths, in the *salles*, and the joy was complete when Monseigneur made his appearance first in one room and then in another, serving the old

men and women with his own hands, and, as usual, finding a word to say to each, whilst answering twenty questions at once. They cheered him, they kissed his *soutane* as he passed, they caught him by the hand, and led him hither and thither as they listed.

On one of these Christmas nights, the good Bishop noticed an old woman who wore a sad look on her face, and who sat apart from the rest, not attempting to join in the festivity. Upon his going over to her and asking what was the matter, the poor old soul replied, weepingly, that, no longer being very active in her movements, she had somehow or other managed to be left behind when her companions went up to the altar-rails. Hence the cause of her grief. "Is that it?" exclaimed Monseigneur, "then do not fret any more. I am still here, am I not? Come along with me, and I will give you Holy Communion at once." Giving his arm to the overjoyed old woman, and guiding her tottering steps with the greatest care, to the foot of the altar, the prelate bade a Little Sister light up the candles, passed a stole round his neck, and brought the Sacred Host to the devout soul who was longing to receive her Lord.

From the above we may easily understand that the name of Monseigneur Mermillod was held in love and veneration by Little Sisters and old people alike.

There came an hour when this little oratory was the only spot in all the parish of Carouge—a parish of six thousand Catholics—where the Sacrifice of Holy Mass could be offered. For, despite the treaty of 1815, at which date the Allied Powers had guaranteed the liberty of religious worship to the people, the parish church had been given over to the schismatics, and whilst a temporary wooden building was in course of erection, the parochial Offices were celebrated in the chapel of the Home for the Aged, every window being thrown open, so that the concourse of the faithful, too numerous to enter, might hear Mass from outside in the yard and garden ; and hither the people flocked in vast numbers, kneeling devoutly, utterly regardless of rain and snow, as they prayed that better days might dawn for their persecuted Church.

At last the persecution which had so often threatened the Little Sisters, but had invariably stopped short at their threshold, burst upon their devoted heads. Their extreme prudence in dealing with the Calvinistic authorities had hitherto saved them from expulsion, but now a new enemy arose with which they were powerless to cope, namely, war against religion under the cloak of political necessity. The State, therefore, made an attack upon the Little Sisters, together with all other Orders of Charity, proposing to confiscate their property and expel them from Swiss territory,

notwithstanding that the said property was the outcome of public generosity, and devoted solely and entirely to the service of the poor of Geneva.

The horror and consternation with which the poor old people heard of the likelihood of their beloved Sisters being torn from them, cannot be described, and it required all the tact and gentleness of the latter to keep their anger and indignation within bounds. "Who had the right," they argued, "to turn them out of their Home? God had given it them; it was theirs to live and to die in!"

The distress of the Little Sisters was no less acute at the fear of having to forsake these poor old souls to whose welfare, moral and physical, they had given their lives, and whom they loved dearly. Upheld, however, by their constant habit of obedience and resignation to God's will, they waited patiently to see how the persecution would end, confident that whatever future was in store for them, Providence would not forsake them, but would give them the needful grace and strength under all their difficulties.

The anguish of mind, however, of the Good-Father General at this moment of heavy trial to his daughters surpassed their own by a thousand-fold. The title of *Father* was no idle word in the case of Père Le Pailleur; his heart bled as he followed, step by step, the crooked windings of the religious persecution

in Switzerland—bled for his children—the children whom he had consecrated to the service of the poor, and whose loving zeal was checked by scorn and repudiation—and bled for the poor old men and women whom he could not endure the thought of forsaking. The lapse of years, and the rapid increase of his Family, had in no wise lessened the depth and tenderness of that loving compassion which had first engendered in Père Le Pailleur's heart this heroic Institution of Charity, destined to soothe and console the last days of, not one or two, but thousands of aged, helpless, suffering human beings. That heart beat as warmly for them now as in the days when the number of filthy, repulsive beggars afflicted it so sorely as he walked in the neighbourhood of St. Malo and St. Servan; and these their sufferings and dangers were a heavy cross for him to bear. And yet, how were eighty infirm old creatures, for the most part semi-paralyzed or crippled with age and rheumatism, to be transported to another country? Human reasoning declared that the thing was impossible, that it was out of the question to attempt to cope with the government of the country, etc.

And yet the Good-Father could not bring himself to decide on a separation. Time after time he sent blessings and encouraging words to his afflicted daughters. An hour came, however, when a decision had to be taken. The law of exile was about

to be decreed—of that there was no doubt. And now it seemed to Père Le Pailleur that all the sound reasoning, all the solid arguments, which had hitherto carried weight, were faulty at the basis, that they were incompatible with the spirit of his Institution. "The Little Sisters *cannot* abandon their old charges," he kept saying to himself; "for they are their children. As long as the old people choose to belong to the Little Family, the Little Family may not forsake them. We must take with us all those who are willing to follow us to France, and not desert them."

Needless to say that any decision of the Good-Father's was approved by the Chapter of the Congregation, and more especially one so thoroughly in keeping with the latter's statutes. To the Little Sisters, nothing was more natural, nothing simpler; they only wondered that this solution of their difficulty had not occurred to them before. Surely the Little Family which succeeded in maintaining hundreds of indigent poor in various quarters of the globe need not fear that Providence would not give them means to support eighty old men and women, said they, as they repeated, again and again, their Good-Father's words, "Our poor are our treasure; we will not part with them."

A Good-Mother Assistant accordingly was sent from the Tour to convey this ultimatum to the

Geneva House, and timely, indeed, was her arrival, as eight days were all that the Little Sisters could count upon before they might expect to be turned out at a moment's notice. These eight days were spent by the old people in making their jubilee (it was in 1875), and served as a retreat to prepare and fortify them for coming trials. Towards the end of the week, the Council of State signified to the Little Sisters that, at the expiration of a month, they would be formally expelled the territory.

The grief of the old people was extreme, but they were greatly consoled by the proposal which the Good-Mother made to them, as she repeated the words of the Father-General, and unanimously they declared that they would follow their Little Sisters to the ends of the earth, if needs be. Nevertheless, glad and thankful though they were at not being separated from their beloved benefactresses, these last days were a time of cruel suffering to the poor old souls. They had many a tie which bound them to Geneva—it was their town, their native land; no other country would seem so fair to them, no other House so beautiful as this their cherished Home, of which they were so justly proud. They would be strangers everywhere else. And sadly, lovingly, they went about, bidding farewell to every spot, kissing the walls, touching the shrubs in the garden, which their own hands had helped to plant, gazing at the

ripe fruit hanging on their trees, gathering the last flowers to put in their prayer-books as souvenirs. They wished to carry away whole branches, but the Good-Father's orders were formal. "Take away your poor," he had said to his daughters; "leave all the rest behind." Every day their hearts were torn anew by seeing an officer of the law, accompanied by two or three clerks, taking stock of the furniture of the House, examining, appraising, and cataloguing the mattresses and palliasses, the comfortable old armchairs and sofas, of every size and shape, on which they had so often rested their weary limbs, the tables on which they had eaten their daily food, and even the worm-eaten old garden-benches, whereon they had passed many a happy hour, warming themselves in the sunshine. The poor old souls wept bitterly as they watched this work of desecration. One day it was two of their cows which they saw led away from their stalls; the next, violent hands were laid on their donkey, who, poor beast, unaccustomed to obey any one but the Little Sister-*quêteuse*, and the old man who had charge of him, resisted with might and main—biting, kicking, and braying—until, by dint of blows, and pulling and tugging on the part of half a dozen limbs of the law, he was dragged away, protesting lustily, after his own fashion, against this violent expulsion.

And thus, day by day, the House was despoiled. At last, even the chapel stood empty. Immediately after the projected expulsion had been notified, a last Mass had been said, and the Sacred Species consumed. Nevertheless, the poor, desolate old men and women would wander in there, kneeling before the empty Tabernacle, to seek comfort where comfort had hitherto invariably been found, weeping silently at the recollection of the happy days gone never to return.

Meanwhile, on his side, Père Le Pailleur had been making active preparations for receiving the exiles. They were too numerous, of course, to be all taken into one House, so he arranged that they should be sent in detachments of eight, ten, fifteen, or twenty, to those Houses nearest the frontier which afforded the greater facilities for communication with Geneva; taking care, also, that each of these little companies should have at least one or two of the Little Sisters with them, to whose loving care they had been accustomed, and thus the pangs of exile be lessened, and their grief softened, so far as lay in the power of his large, paternal heart. To his daughters the Good-Father had written: "Make your departure as quietly as possible; avoid any outward demonstration, and pray for those who are banishing you."

The departure, therefore, was effected with the

utmost calm; each contingent of old people, under the escort of several Little Sisters, setting forth in its turn in the early morning for the railway station, whence all took their respective ways to Lyons, Grenoble, Lons-le-Saulnier, St. Etienne, Roanne, Annonay, and Tarare. Kind-hearted benefactors had taken care to send provisions for the journey, and the Good-Mother of the Lyons House, hearing that several of the exiles were to pass through that city on their journey farther, obtained permission from the railway authorities to stay in the station and meet the trains, which had half an hour or so to wait. Here she and some of her Little Sisters posted themselves, armed with a veritable battery of saucepans, mugs, and even benches, on which the poor old travellers might sit, as they ate a hasty meal. When a train arrived, the officials and porters lent a willing hand to the Sisters in helping their guests down from the railway carriages, bringing seats of their own, and armchairs from the waiting-rooms for the more infirm; and a touching spectacle it was to see all these poor old things, their eyes red with weeping, their cheeks wan with so unusual a fatigue as a journey, smiling gratefully at the new Mothers and friends who came to greet and serve them on this the first stage of their sojourn in a foreign land. Several of the passengers inquiring the cause of such an unwonted sight, upon hearing that these were the "proscribed exiles from

Geneva," emptied their purses into the hands of the Little Sisters, who went about attending to their charges as smilingly, as serenely, as much at home on the platform of a railway station, as if they had been serving them in the familiar refectory at home.

CHAPTER XIII.

SPAIN—A CENTENARY—FÊTES.

If the Belgian Foundations were welcomed with joy and gratitude beyond any others of which we have yet spoken, what shall we say of those in Spain, where the Little Sisters were met by such enthusiasm as to put their modesty and humility to the proof? The little blue pamphlet by the pen of M. Aubineau had already familiarized Spanish readers with them; newspaper articles had followed, recounting the wonders of charity worked right and left by these valiant and devoted women, and soon prelates, ecclesiastics, governors, dignitaries of State, civilians, tradesmen, and all classes of society united in agreeing that "Catholic Spain" must not be left out of this grand movement of charity which was astir in the world, and which bore the stamp of Divine protection so clearly marked upon its face. Letter after letter, petition after petition, were sent to the Good-Father General from all parts of the kingdom, beseeching him to send a colony of his daughters to the relief of

the aged poor in Spain, and when these arrived, the delight of the people knew no bounds. They would willingly have prostrated themselves at the feet of these sweet, holy little women, who had left home and country to come and tend their poor.

The beauty of a devotion which has for its sole object the soothing of the declining years of the most forlorn and often most abject members of humanity, loving these and cherishing them as tenderly as if they were their children, feeding them, clothing them, and maintaining them by the practice of charity in its most humiliating form, that of holding out their own hands for alms, fired every generous impulse in the Spanish character, and the people knew not how to express their admiration, whilst they manifested their joy by meeting the Sisters with processions of all the notabilities in the towns to which they came, conveying them in triumph to their destination, with bands playing and banners flying, finally serenading them, and sending up fireworks in their honour.

Nor was this outward exuberance sterile. In no other country have the Little Sisters met with more generous benefactors or stauncher friends.

Barcelona was the first Spanish town which had the happiness of possessing Little Sisters, and the Good-Mother of the new Foundation wrote shortly after her arrival, "Truly our good God spoils us; the whole place is in movement on our behalf; never is

the house empty ; we have scarcely even time to eat. The work is such a novelty to these good Spaniards, that they wish to see everything with their own eyes. We are already abundantly supplied with linen, as with provisions of all kinds. Everything abounds. The first day when the *quêteuses* went to the markets, it was a regular triumphal procession ; they were surrounded and escorted by such a crowd of people they could scarcely move. . . . The Governor received us with the utmost kindness, and has assured us of his protection." In less than a year's time, the Barcelona House had developed in a truly prodigious manner. Situated about half a mile from the town, it already contained a hundred pensioners, whilst as many more were anxiously waiting for admittance. It possessed a hundred and fifty iron bedsteads, with bedding, blankets, and sheets, and the traditional donkey and cart, which latter, on its first journey through the streets, came back laden with no less than seventy-eight pairs of brand-new sheets. When the Little Sisters paid their respects to the Bishop, and had answered his questions touching their Institution, he said to them, his voice husky with emotion, " Perhaps your House is too small ? If it is, and you are in want of space, bring your poor to my palace, and if you want a carriage to convey them in, come and fetch mine as often as you like. Don't hesitate."

Manresa was the second town to implore the

presence of the Little Sisters, where after having prayed awhile at the shrine of St. Ignatius, and placed themselves under the special protection of the soldier-Saint, they were conducted by the mayor and town council to the house which had been prepared for them ; their journey from the railway station one continual ovation, and the streets lined with the inhabitants eager to welcome the ardently looked-for *Hermanitas de los Pobres*. And now women and children pressed forward with offers of help in cleaning and straightening up the house, which was thus set in order so quickly that on the very next day four infirm old women, who had vegetated for years in a state of poverty and filth beyond description, were no less surprised than delighted to find themselves snugly ensconced in such beds as they had never seen in their lives, their persons as clean as the linen which they so greatly admired. On the Sunday following, the municipal authorities reappeared in search of the good Sisters, and ceremoniously conducted them and their four old women to the parish church, where a sermon was preached by a Jesuit Father, who concluded his words of welcome to the foreign Sisters by a few sentences in their own tongue.

At Granada, again, in the year 1863, we find similar enthusiasm shown. A gentleman who had watched the work in Barcelona wrote to the Father-General, "The more we see of this work, the more we admire

it. Whether we look at it from a religious, a social, or a political point of view, we find that it bears the stamp of a Divine gift, sent by the Almighty to satisfy an urgent need of the present century. The good done thereby profits the rich who give, as much as the poor who receive, whilst the tears of gratitude and the blessings uttered by these poor old souls touch the heart far more than did their sordid rags when they were begging in the streets. It is a fact that the material bread which the Little Sisters receive is transformed by them into Divine food, namely, into the love of God, which is written so clearly that all may read it on their own smiling faces, beaming as they do with humility and loving-kindness." To this letter was appended a petition, signed by thirty-five of the most influential citizens (one of whom had written his name "on behalf of all the aged and infirm poor of the town"), in which the following eloquent testimony was rendered to our dear Little Sisters :—"The sight of such great abnegation, of such profound humility, of such ardent love of God and of His poor, could not do otherwise than touch our hearts with gratitude towards Him Who has transformed these weak, delicate women into shining torches of the Faith, into powerful anchors of salvation. They bring us new testimony of the Gospel truth that the Most High has ever care of the preservation of His Church, and that He will never fail to send her the

healing balm of which each succeeding generation has need, in order that the wounds caused by the perversity of men may be healed. . . . Is it not natural that we should beseech your reverence to grant us a portion of those immense treasures which the admirable Institution confided to your care contains? The town watered by the blood of the martyr Cecilia; the town snatched from Islam by the faith of our Catholic Isabella; the town to which John of the Cross, the Saint and servant of the poor, has left the memory of his blessed example; the town placed under the special patronage of Our Lady of Compassion, is ready waiting with open arms to receive these new children of Charity, the Little Sisters of the Poor."

We have given the above quotations at some length, as it is consoling to the friends of the Little Family to see that their path, sometimes so thorny, always so steep and rugged, is here and there strewn with the roses of sympathy and appreciation, the more so as in these days the novelty of their Institution has worn away from men's minds, and other and more brilliant undertakings have been permitted to cast them into the shade and render them more than ever like to their Blessed Lord, Who preceded them in their path of littleness and hidden virtues, Himself, like them, a folly and a scandal in the eyes of many.

The Superiors naturally responded to so pressing a call, and although the resources of Granada were small, and the population itself so needy that, as the Good-Mother wrote word, it was a daily miracle that they should subsist at all in a town so devoid of means, the House was never allowed to know want, thanks to the unfailing generosity of the inhabitants. The first time the Sisters went into the markets to beg, a young collegian and a poor woman preceded them, and explained the purport of their visit right and left, when potatoes, melons, oil, and other comestibles were given them on all sides. One of the first old people to be received was a poor gipsy who had been forsaken by his tribe, and was rather an object of terror to the townsfolk, as the acuteness of his sufferings caused him to utter unearthly shrieks and groans as he lay upon a heap of fetid straw in an underground cellar, the poor creature being in such a condition of misery and impotence that his appearance, like his cries, was more that of a wild beast than of a human being. The Little Sisters went to him and took him home with them, washed him, clothed and fed him, and tenderly laid him in a clean white bed, themselves slightly alarmed the while by the ferocity of his screams and gesticulations. Their patience and loving care soon, however, conquered the savage nature, and after a few days a complete change took place in the poor creature—the stony old

heart melted under the softening influences, and he died, some time later, blessing God and the holy women who had had pity on him in his wretchedness.

In the year 1864, the Spanish Foundations had the joy of receiving a visit from their venerable Superiors, who brought with them yet another battalion of Little Sisters in order to respond to the anxious demands of Lerida, which Foundation was made in mid-winter; and winter in Lerida means frost and snow. Great was the admiration of the inhabitants when they saw the Sisters go to the public well in all weathers, draw water with their own hands, and carry it gaily up to the second floor on which was located the Home. The old people, also, would weep and kiss the hands of their Little Sisters, as these latter put off their own warm clothing, and laid it over the aged limbs of their dear charges, saying that they were young, and did not feel the cold—charity which was soon rewarded by the reception of a pile of woollen garments, linen, etc., all new and ready-made by the generous donors. One of the poor old creatures who, paralyzed from head to foot, had lain in a cellar on a heap of straw for thirteen months, her only covering a few rags, when she found herself in a clean, warm bed, would keep repeating aloud, "Oh, my God! I cannot be long for this world, I am too comfortable!"

But to return to the visit of the good Superiors. It

can be readily imagined that if the daughters were received with such joyful ovations wherever they bent their steps, greater still was the veneration shown towards the founders—the parents, if we may so call them, of this blessed Family. During the three months of their sojourn in Spain, their daily life was one continued *fête*, the whole population, with ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries at the head, striving by every means in their power to testify their admiration and gratitude. Often, in order to satisfy the great number of persons who wished to see and speak with the founders, a walk in the country had to be proposed, the rooms of the Homes being far too small to contain such crowds; but here another difficulty presented itself: no sooner was their presence known than a joyous multitude surrounded them, anxious to see them and to kiss their hands or their clothing, which equally rendered circulation impossible. It was indeed a triumphal progress—the triumph of charity.

"What a good people!" wrote the Good-Mother General, during her visit to Spain. "Their kindness to the Little Sisters and to us is beyond all description. Tell our little Spanish novices at home that their relatives have shown us the most touching attentions. Bless God with us for all the good which is being done in the midst of a population which had never seen such a thing as Sisters begging

for the poor, and devoting themselves to their care. They weep for joy in the fervour of their faith when they are told that the Good-Father was a humble *vicaire* of St. Servan, and that I was the little work-girl Marie Jamet. The harvest is abundant; do you become good labourers that you may soon come and gather it in. There ought to be missionaries doing nothing else but going about the world preaching charity and the love of poverty for the glory of God."

The path of the venerable Superiors from Lerida to Jaen, from Jaen to Granada, from Granada to Lorca, Cartagena, and Malaga, was marked everywhere alike by the acclamations of the populace, by the complimentary visits of officials, and by every outward demonstration which the worthy Spaniards could invent to testify their joy and sympathy. On their way to Lorca, whither they travelled by sea, they disembarked at Almeria, and immediately directed their steps to the cathedral. Here Père Le Pailleur was recognized by some one present, and was immediately surrounded by all the Canons, who carried him off to the sacristy in order to ply him with eager questions (which he answered as best he might, possessing, as he did, a very slender knowledge of Spanish), whilst the Good-Mother General waited with another Little Sister in the church, where, in the course of a very few minutes, they found themselves

surrounded by a crowd of friendly looking persons, who touched their cloaks, and took their hands and stroked them, repeating, "It is the *Hermanitas!*" and made signs to entreat of them to come and rest and refresh themselves in their dwellings. This journey to Lorca was somewhat complicated by the heavy snows which had obstructed the roads in many parts, but when the good Superiors at last arrived, and descended from the lumbering old public vehicle, they found grand coaches awaiting them with the usual *cortége* of functionaries, into which *nolens volens* they had to ascend and be conveyed in triumph to the Home, in front of which stood another crowd, consisting of Little Sisters, old people, and benefactors. The next day was Sunday, and again the Superiors were fetched in procession to assist at a High Mass (sung in thanksgiving to Almighty God for the presence of the Little Sisters in the town of Lorca), and were seated in front of the choir, next to the governor, generals, and other grandees, whilst a detachment of infantry stood sentinel at the doors in order to keep the transports of the populace within bounds.

And now new Foundations sprang up in every direction under the steps of the Superiors. It often sufficed that they should tarry on their journey for a day, or even an hour, for a new House to be decided upon. Requests poured in in greater numbers than

there were subjects to supply, and when the good founders finally quitted Spain, if their bodies were worn and harassed by the fatigue of so much travelling, so many ovations, and so many events crowded into a short space of time, their hearts were filled to overflowing with consolation at the sight of the kindness shown towards the Little Family and of the vast amount of good which their work was called upon to effect, now and in years to come, as postulants should increase in number, and they could respond to all the demands for Foundations made by this generous people.

From the year 1865 to 1867, it was impossible to send more Little Sisters to Spain. England and Belgium had earnestly besought their presence, and fresh Houses had been opened in various parts of France. In 1867, however, the capital of Spain had the happiness of welcoming a little colony of *Hermanitas*, to whom the whole city, with its gracious Sovereign at the head, gave the most enthusiastic reception. As the Good-Mother Assistant, who was sent to make the Foundation, wrote to her Superiors: "We have only to wish for anything we want and it comes." On entering their future Home, two bedsteads and two brooms were all the furniture it contained, but presently there arrived a party of workmen with a fine new kitchen-range, and a load of coals, sent by a French company in token of welcome to

their holy country-women; next came a deputation of the great ladies of Madrid, each bringing her offering to the chapel: chalice, ciborium, vestments, crucifixes, curtains, altar-lamp, and even a large picture of Our Blessed Lady. Bedding, blankets, linen, chairs, and tables followed, and, finally, a statue of St. Joseph, which had been placed in the refectory in order to take possession, was nearly buried under packets of rice, beans, chocolate, etc.; many a charitable person walking in and laying a little parcel down at the Saint's feet, and going quietly away again, without saying a word. Aged pensioners were not long in following these gifts, arriving twelve in number to start with, one of whom was aged 104, and was still sprightly enough to teach her benefactresses how to cook in Spanish fashion! The old people in Spain have always shown a thoroughly good spirit, and understand and appreciate the work which is done for them as it deserves. In one or two places they manifested a certain fear before entering as to how they should find themselves off with foreign Sisters, but those who had hesitated the most were soon the first to proclaim their happiness. One old man, on being asked how he got along in his new quarters, replied, "I am a great deal too comfortable. I am clothed like a king, and lodged like a lord. I have a delicious table, and a bed like a bridegroom's. Much more attention is paid to me than I deserve. I have

only one care, and that is to find the coolest spot in which to take my midday sleep."

This same year (1867) merits especial notice as being that in which the hundredth Foundation was made (at Toulon), to celebrate which joyful event Père Le Pailleur ordered that there should be a general *fête* throughout all the Houses of the Congregation, and to this effect he wrote as follows:—

"La Tour St. Joseph, May 22, 1867.

"My Little Children,

". . . . Your Good-Mother General and I are lost in admiration at these wonders worked by Divine Providence, Who has brought such great things to pass out of nothing. Twenty-six years ago we possessed the little attic, nothing else. That attic sheltered two poor, infirm old women. Now more than ten thousand poor old men and women are sheltered in these Homes. And we are as poor as we were the first day; we have now, as then, no income, no funded property, no assured source of revenue. God has wished it so, in order that it may be manifest to all that it is He alone Who works all these miracles, and that to Him alone must the glory be given.

"I come, then, my children, to bid you all give glory to God for the founding of our hundredth House. I come to bid you all render a thousand thanksgivings

to this All-powerful God, Who has created the Little Family out of nothing, Who preserves it, feeds it, blesses it, and makes it grow and multiply in so admirable a manner for the manifestation of His Name and the salvation of so many poor. I bid you also to rejoice with us in the Lord. For this hundredth Foundation is a great cause for rejoicing to us all. I desire that there be a *fête* in every House, and that you invite all our good benefactors to this *fête*. Take whatever day you like. Let there be a great feast for the old people, like on our principal Festivals. I grant recreation for the whole day. I desire also, so that this joy may return to Our Blessed Lord, that you obtain permission, if possible, from their lordships, our Bishops, to close the day with solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

"LE PAILLEUR, Priest."

It is needless to say that the Good-Father General's wishes were carried out, to the joy of Little Sisters, old pensioners, and benefactors alike. Doubtless many of our readers have assisted at similar festivities in different Houses of the Little Sisters, on such days as St. Joseph's Feast, etc., and have donned a white apron, and handed round course after course to the happy old people (who look forward to these gala-days from one end of the year to the other), platefuls of soup, then fish, then a roast, custard, or some kind

of pudding, cakes, and finally fruit. The old souls are seated in rows round the long tables in the day-rooms, all in their cleanest and smartest array, smiling with delight at being waited upon by ladies and gentlemen, but keenly on the watch lest these amateur waiters and waitresses should forget their turns, or fail to fill their mugs to the very brim with the good wine sent by some kind friend of the House to cheer the aged old hearts, or the coffee with which the meal ends, and which would not be perfect without the final *gloria*—in other words, a *liqueur*-glass of brandy poured into the steaming Mocha. Neither do their old eyes fail to watch eagerly for the arrival of a large bowl which is handed round whilst they are sipping their coffee, when every variety of queer little box and bag is brought forth by old dames as well as by old men, in anticipation of the precious donation of a pinch of snuff! Nor are the poor bedridden old creatures upstairs forgotten; a merry detachment of young folks being told off to serve them in their turn, one of whom was much amused one day by an aged woman (whose death was hourly expected, and who had, in fact, just received the Last Sacraments), whom she was going to pass over, calling to her, "*Ma petite demoiselle*, put my wine on that table beside me, and when I have got to Paradise, and feel better than I do now, I'll come down and drink it!"

When dinner is over, the tables are rapidly cleared, and the amusements of the afternoon begin. It may surprise many, considering the ages of the merry-makers, to know that dancing is the principal of these, and wonderful are the steps and bows and pirouettes performed by the ancient limbs, for the most part septuagenarian at the very least. The old women are perhaps the more active, and a pair of them will keep up a jig or a reel for a quarter of an hour at a time, before joining in a round wherein Good-Mother and Little Sisters alike take part—sometimes to the tune of an old accordion, if they have a musician amongst the old men, sometimes to a tambourine and castanets, sometimes to a drum, or a triangle, or a mandoline, according to country; and proud, indeed, is the *artiste*, who is generally perched up on a sort of throne overlooking the assembly. Then come songs—the words now and again composed by some aged poet who has come to hide the misfortunes of his non-success in the Home—whilst occasionally an old crone will burst forth unexpectedly into a patriotic chant of an interminable number of verses, the chorus of which is taken up lustily by the rest, but threatens to end in a drawl, till a Little Sister, her face flushed with pleasure at the happiness of her old children, beats time with the first object transformable into a *bâton* which she can seize. The gaiety of the Little Sisters on these

occasions is incredible: as we have said over and over again, to smile and to be gay appears to be a part of their Rule; as though by their tender, sprightly ways, their encouraging caresses, as they stroke the withered old cheeks of their poor old charges with a pleasant little joke on their lips, they would make them forget past miseries and even present infirmities. As a rule, the old souls respond to the joyous spirit of the Little Sisters and become light-hearted themselves, catching the infection of their simple piety and thankfulness. The most obdurate melancholy cannot hold out long against so much cheeriness, and even servile idiotcy rarely assumes any but a smiling form in their Houses. One old woman who had gone through a lifetime of misery of all kinds was so overjoyed, when she entered the Home for the Aged, that joy literally turned her brain, and took the form of a dancing mania; she danced from morning till night, in and out of the rooms, the dormitories, yards, and gardens, in a way most comical to behold, until the body absolutely refused to obey the over-excited spirit. The poor old creatures who, after many a tempestuous voyage, are finally stranded in these havens of peace and love, come from as varied conditions of life as do the garments with which charity provides them. They are by no means all of the beggar class; there is, indeed, a certain House where no less than six ladies

of title have taken refuge from the abject poverty into which the noble families of the district have fallen. As a rule, those who have come from a life of street-mendicancy leave the Home again; they cannot stand the confinement, beneficent as it is, or the deprivation of the public-house. Day-labourers, mechanics, broken-down tradesmen, proprietors of hotels, gardeners, seamen, lawyers' clerks, school-teachers, newspaper-writers, etc., have been found registered on the lists of the Little Sisters; whilst invariably those who have been well-to-do, and have received a certain education, are the most contented, the most tractable, and the most anxious to put forth their remaining strength in the service of their good benefactresses. Often the very accent and expressions of some decent-looking old body bending over her sewing will cause the visitor to stop and ask for her history, when he hears that she has perhaps kept a shop or a hotel in some important town, and been ruined by a spendthrift husband or son, her business sold, herself left to starve, and nothing but want staring her in the face, till some kind friend took her to the Little Sisters, on whom her eye rests lovingly as she tells of their goodness and of her gratitude.

Now we notice an old man sitting huddled up in two or three great-coats, close to the stove although the room is very warm (one old soul we knew would

have as many as six coats on, one atop of the other, and even then complained of being frozen !), and wiping his spectacles as he tries to con over some very small print—looking over his shoulder, we find that it is a volume of Shakespeare. An ex-ballet dancer, who had been a star in her time, found her way at eighty-two years of age to a bed in one of the Homes, and her happiness and gratitude knew no bounds. "O my God," she kept repeating, "had I only known of this place sooner, I should have been here long ago, and should not have offended Thee so often." The religion of an old person about to be received is never inquired into—it makes no difference; provided that he or she is not less than sixty years of age, and is without means of subsistence, that is all that is required. Some people think that by offering a sum of money, the entrance of a *protégé* is facilitated. This is far from being the case; on the contrary, the poor person who has charitable friends to look after him, or has a little money of his own, is invariably placed last on the list, and must wait for his turn till those who are absolutely forsaken and destitute, not only of means, but also of friends, have been admitted. Sometimes the poor souls brought to the Home are filled with the bitterest animosity against God and against society at large. Whilst weak and starving, these sentiments lie dormant, but wake up with ferocity when care

and good food have brought back a certain strength to the aged body. It has never been known, however, for any to die impenitent; by God's mercy, the patient kindness of the Little Sisters, together with their fervent prayers, have always succeeded in obtaining a good end for their charges. As one of the Sisters said, when we were deploring the ungrateful behaviour of one of her old children, and the many trials occasioned by the bad spirit then prevailing in a certain House, "Never mind, all will come right in time. There is one consolation which never fails us, and that is the happy deaths of our poor dear old people."

Many other little *fêtes* of a more intimate nature take place at various times, to celebrate such events as a First Communion amongst the old people. Not very long ago, at one of the Houses in France (Auch), an old man was confided to the Little Sisters who had been dumb (but not deaf) from his birth. He was exceedingly intelligent, and his frank, pleasant countenance bore witness to many a good quality, but, the Sisters were informed, although sixty-two years of age, he had never made his First Communion. With infinite zeal and patience his instruction was commenced by the Chaplain, the other old people helping as best they might throughout the day by talking to him about the portions of the Catechism he was trying to comprehend, and so well

did they succeed, that he who had formerly been inattention itself, and even noisy in his movements when in chapel, would remain motionless, his eyes fixed upon the Tabernacle, and walking to his place on tiptoe, so as to disturb no one present. Finally the hour came when the poor dumb creature was to receive the happiness after which he earnestly longed. He was accordingly conducted processionally to the chapel in the midst of all the old men, in all the bravery of a First Communicant's attire, even to the white ribbon with fringed ends tied round his arm, the white cravat, and large candle (the gift of a benefactor) which he carried proudly in his hand. On either side of him walked an acolyte, who knelt with him at the gate of the sanctuary, whilst the celebrant helped him to renew his baptismal vows, and then, leading him by the hand inside the sanctuary rails, made him understand how that, together with the candle, he must offer his whole heart to God, and repeated for him aloud the acts of faith, love, and desire. Tears streamed down the cheeks of many of the old men and women present, as this touching scene reminded them of the joys of their own youth. All accompanied their comrade to the Holy Table, and declared that they were renewing their own First Communions, whilst the voices of the Little Sisters filled the chapel with praises to Almighty God for the favour He was

conferring upon His poor afflicted creature, and the happiness which they felt at so consoling a spectacle. A second joy was in store for the happy Communicant. It so happened that the day chosen was the anniversary of the First Communion of the Archbishop of the diocese, who, hearing of the little ceremony about to take place at the Home, announced his intention of coming to give Confirmation to the old man, and also to an old woman who had never had the happiness of receiving that Sacrament, so that he might sanctify the day, as he said, "by doing something for God." Everything was *en fête* by the time his Lordship arrived; from the entrance door, across yard and garden, the Little Sisters had contrived an arched passage of greenery and flowers, and the whole household was drawn up in a circle before the chapel, and struck up the *Magnificat* directly the prelate set foot within the enclosure. He, on his side, recognized the hero of the day by his costume, and, going straight up to him, kissed him on the forehead with a kindness truly paternal.

Another Sacrament is also administered now and again in the Little Sisters' chapels—that of Marriage. Strange as it may seem, some of the old couples who are received, after having passed thirty or forty years together as man and wife, are discovered to be nothing of the sort; whereupon, after some teaching

on the part of the good Sisters and many prayers, they are brought (often to their own considerable surprise) to see the errors of those long years' standing, and are subsequently joined together in the bonds of Holy Matrimony.

CHAPTER XIV.

HERE AND THERE.

It would be quite impossible to give an account of every Foundation made by the Little Family—volumes would not suffice. The Houses in America and Oceania alone might fill a book in themselves. Paris, however, being the capital of the country which gave them birth, is entitled to more than a passing mention, especially as that city possesses no fewer than seven Houses, those of the Rue St. Jacques, the Avenue de Breteuil, the Rue Picpus, the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, the Rue Philippe de Girard, St. Denis, and Levallois-Perret.

The first idea of a Foundation in Paris seems to have been started by the *Univers* newspaper (by the pen, naturally, of Louis Veuillot), and was warmly seconded by the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul. The Good-Mother General and her Assistant, Mother Marie-Louise, arrived alone in the spring of the year 1849, and were housed by the Sisters of Charity, who were themselves too poor to give them other hospitality

than sleeping accommodation. These two brave little women had never been in Paris in their lives, had never seen so large a town, and yet they unhesitatingly started off *alone*, morning after morning, map in hand, to seek for a residence suitable to their purpose. Courage, moral and physical, seems to have been from the beginning one of the special attributes of the Little Sisters of the Poor—a courage which we are inclined to think is perhaps one of the graces specially procured for them by their great devotion to St. Joseph, the Saint's rewarding their unvarying confidence by bestowing on them that calmness under anxiety, that prompt docility and unaltered sweetness under harassing cares and unexpected situations, of which he gave so great an example during his ministrations to the Holy Child Jesus and His Mother. Such a life as theirs required courage to undertake. Courage was wanted for begging in the streets of St. Servan, where at least they were surrounded by familiar sights and faces; whereas, when Good-Mother Marie-Augustine —a very young girl at the time, be it remembered— went alone to Rennes, there to open a House in the very worst quarter of that town; faced the authorities alone; found out her future charges alone—for this purpose searching the least reassuring alleys and purlieus—it seems to us that she required a very unusual share of this virtue. Courage, again, was shown by the Sisters who slept with open doors at Dinan, at the mercy of

the public.[1] But never was greater courage shown than on their arrival in a vast and unknown city like Paris, where every habit and custom was strange to them, and where they might well have been bewildered and dismayed by the difficulty of finding a lodging, by the protracted delays, by their complete isolation, and by the state of absolute want and abjection to which they found themselves reduced—being obliged frequently, in order not to starve, to go for their food to the public soup-kitchens, where, taking their turn with the vagabonds, drunkards, and riff-raff who mixed with the respectable poor round the wicket, they meekly passed in their basins to be filled with soup or potatoes according to the day's ordinary, in exchange for a ticket worth one or two pence. Weeks and months of this existence went by—an existence which laid the seeds of an affection of the heart, from which the Good-Mother has never since ceased to suffer—and yet the brave hearts never grew faint. That beautiful bright courage of the true Little Sister held on its way, always rejoicing, however dark the surroundings and gloomy the horizon. They keenly felt the deprivation of Community life, and even more keenly the absence of their poor; but neither privations nor

[1] At Bordeaux, in later years, the Little Sisters established themselves in a house shunned by all the inhabitants, and held in terror as haunted. They had a Mass said there, however, and were disturbed neither by ghosts nor by the coiners who apparently had caused the unearthly noises.

disappointments ever for an instant led them to think of leaving Paris or giving up the projected Foundation. They simply offered up all their manifold tribulations for the end they had in view, quite content to suffer if such were God's will, but quite certain that He would come to their help in His own good time.

During this period of cruel suspense, Good-Mother Marie-Augustine was compelled to make a short absence from Paris on business connected with other Houses, leaving Sister Marie-Louise alone to guard the interests of the desired Foundation. At that juncture Paris was visited by an outbreak of cholera; so, in order to pass the time and be of use to her fellow-creatures, this brave Little Sister set to work nursing cholera patients, and caught the malady herself. She recovered; but her health, weakened by her late privations, was completely ruined.

Not until five more months had been passed in this terrible poverty were the negotiations for the Foundation brought to a successful issue, and the first House opened in the Rue St. Jacques, and five poor, aged creatures received within its shelter. The hour of trial was not yet over, however. Paris, that most generous of cities, where every misery incidental to poor humanity finds its counter-succour, where the Little Family was eventually to receive the most abundant help and sympathy, turned a deaf ear to the meek, pleading accents of the little Bretonnes and

their few friends. It seemed as though the devil, angered at the presence of this new centre of charity, which was to rob hell of so many souls, expended his wrath in throwing obstacle after obstacle in its way. The Little Sisters *could* not, it seemed, make themselves known in the capital; the friends they had, held influential positions, but their eloquence met with no response, and at the end of several months the means of subsistence in the Rue St. Jacques were so meagre that it seemed as if the work could not take root!

The Good-Father General was at a loss to account for this state of things, so different from the course of other Foundations, and, on arriving in Paris himself, scarcely knew what obstacle to attack or in which direction set his batteries. As usual, therefore, in every emergency, he prayed, he reflected, he consulted his Divine Master, and finally came to a conclusion. "I know what I will do," he said to himself; "I will take in as many poor as the House will hold!" Forthwith he ordered the Good-Mother to receive every old person who should present himself, and she admitted thirty in the space of a fortnight. From that moment alms in money and kind flowed in abundantly, the House was able to suffice for itself (instead of receiving continual support from the Tour as heretofore), and it was not long before there was a question of adding another story. This House dates from the seventeenth century, and adjoins the Hospital of Val-

de-Grâce. Three steps lead up to the door, and at first sight the broad staircase with its iron balustrade gives the visitor the idea that he is entering a fine building. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The rooms are low and dark, the passages small and broken up by useless corners and landings, the kitchen is extremely narrow, and infirmaries and dormitories, with their sloping, raftered roofs, are little better than so many granaries. The walls are old and crumbling, and the Sisters have a perpetual struggle to maintain that scrupulous cleanliness which is their pride, whilst a strip of gravelled path, twenty feet in length, constitutes all the recreation-ground of the old people.

Two years after this memorable visit of Père Le Pailleur in 1851, so rapidly had love for the admirable Sisters and their work taken the place of indifference in the hearts of the good Parisians, that a second House was started in the Rue du Regard, brought about at the desire and by the generosity of the National Guard. As soon as the locality was found, two Little Sisters set forth to get it ready for its new purpose, and were joined by one of the officers, who helped them to scrub and clean with his own hands. Furniture there was none, and when an old man presented himself some hours before he was expected, he had to be seated upon the floor as best he might. The Good-Father General brought a statue of Our Blessed Lady, and pictures of St. Joseph and St.

Augustine, and placing the statue on the chimney-piece, and hanging the prints against the wall, he knelt down with his children and said a *pater* and an *ave* that God might bless and fill the house. And that was all the opening ceremony—a statue, two poor prints, bare walls, an old man seated npon the floor, the Congregation represented by two young Sisters in their working aprons, and public generosity in the person of the charitable soldier standing at attention, broom in hand !

By nightfall a bed was procured for the old man, and a couple of palliasses for the Sisters, from which moment the House grew and prospered, and before seven months had elapsed contained a hundred and fifty aged pensioners. In the month of June, the Archbishop of Paris came to bless the chapel, a ceremony which was a *fête* day, not for the inmates of the Home alone, but for the regiment also which had, so to say, founded it, all the 10th assisting and giving the little sanctuary a most martial appearance, as the clanking of swords and firm tread of the soldiers mingled with the rapping of crutches and the shuffling steps of the old men and women.

The first Good-Mother of this House was no other than one of the two young workwomen who, our readers will remember, went to the Home at Tours to help in mending the clothes, and returned again to give herself to the Little Family ; and so well did she

acquit herself of her task, such wisdom and such profound knowledge of the ways of God and of men did she show in her dealings with her old charges, with benefactors, and with her own spiritual daughters, that she was an unceasing source of wonder in the eyes of those who had known her when a little uneducated peasant-girl of the Touraine, earning her livelihood by her needle. Even amongst all those sweet, gentle, and humble women who had donned the black cloak of the Little Sister, Good-Mother Célestine was distinguishable for her meekness and for her simplicity.

When she fell ill of the painful malady which carried her off in the thirty-sixth year of her age and the sixth of her religious profession, her sweetness never forsook her. When her frail body was shaken by the violence of the fever within, and she became delirious for days together, her simple child-like nature remained unaltered, and the word *obedience* sufficed to make her submit unhesitatingly to every treatment imposed upon her. As death approached, consciousness returned, and she had the happiness of receiving the Last Sacraments in the full possession of her senses, after which she sank slowly and calmly, surrounded by her weeping daughters who were gathered about her bed. Her funeral was attended by all the Little Sisters then in Paris, and their old people, together with a vast number of friends and benefactors, all deeply afflicted at the loss of so holy

a Little Sister. The *requiem* Mass was sung at St. Sulpice with unusual pomp (the interment of a Little Sister being usually that of the poorest class, like that of the pauper to whom she consecrates her life). M. Hamon, the Curé, at his own expense, out of veneration for this valiant servant of God, ordered the church to be hung in black, and a catafalque to be erected at the foot of the high altar, round which was a group of her aged children, come to sprinkle the coffin of their Mother with holy-water for the last time, and, together with a crowd of friends of the House, escort her remains to the cemetery of Montparnasse, whilst as the poor old things tottered along, helping each other by the way, and stopping every now and again to take breath, the tears coursed down the wrinkled cheeks in a way most touching to behold.

In the course of a few years, the House in the Rue du Regard became too small for its inmates, and was transferred to the Avenue de Breteuil, where it is now, a large establishment containing between two and three hundred pensioners, and which, when it was opened, received considerable assistance in kind from the École Militaire[1] in memory of its military Foundation.

A trial of a most exceptional nature befell this House in the year 1884, the year of the cholera

[1] This bounty has been withdrawn by Government within the last few years.

visitation, the greater number of the old people being stricken with the disease, and dying in a large proportion. Several of the Little Sisters were down with it at the same time, and between the nursing of the sick, the burying of the dead, the extra work entailed upon the few Sisters who remained valid, and notably upon the Good-Mother (who, happily for her and for the whole Community, was, and is, one of the most valiant, most brave-hearted, most energetic of all these valiant women her Sisters), and the scare produced in the neighbourhood by the dread name of cholera (which caused supplies of every kind to fail just when most needed), the whole household seemed in danger of dying for want of the actual necessaries of life, when the Archbishop (Cardinal Guibert) heard of the plight in which were these his especially beloved children, came and visited them, stopped at the bedside of each sufferer to bless and console him, and filled the hearts of all with renewed courage and fortitude. Thenceforth, daily, the Vicar-General, Abbé Petit, of blessed and venerated memory amongst the Little Sisters, came to cheer and encourage them, bringing them gifts of food and linen, collecting for them from the benefactors at whose doors they could no longer make their weekly rounds, and working for, and with them, until he too contracted the terrible malady, although not fatally. A humble friend also came to them in their need, and rendered no less signal service.

How to bury her dead was one of the most grievous perplexities of the Good-Mother! She and her remaining Little Sisters went backwards and forwards from dead to living, closing the eyes of one, succouring another, feeding one, laying out the other, and carrying down the poor dead bodies from the topmost floors to the bottom of the House, so that the eyes of those who were still living should be spared the sight of their dead comrades. At this juncture an undertaker came to take an order, and recognizing in the Good-Mother a Little Sister whom he had known in another part of Paris, insisted on being allowed to supply the coffins needed, at his own expense, and also on visiting the room where lay the dead. Hearing then of the almost superhuman exertions of the devoted Sisters, and seeing that if the spirit were still strong, the flesh was sinking under the burthen, he entreated to be permitted to share in their task, and for three nights consecutively this good man spent his hours of repose in sharing the labours of laying out the corpses and carrying them downstairs.

By this time the position of the Breteuil House was known at the Tour, and fresh Sisters were sent to relieve and assist the little army so nearly worn out. The cholera scare, however it might have affected the richer population of Paris, had no deterrent effect upon the poor who were seeking admittance into the Home, to whom the many deaths opened an im-

mediate vista of shelter. In vain the Little Sisters entreated them to be patient; the beds were not disinfected, the walls had not been whitewashed, linen there was none, every sheet had been used as a shroud, and the reserve was exhausted; nothing was ready. They would not listen. What was cholera to them? They were dying outside of cold and starvation; beds they had none at all, and were quite ready to risk illness inside, and sleep in the beds just vacated, disinfected or not disinfected, with or without linen.[1]

For further details of the Houses in Paris and their inmates, we would refer our readers to the eloquent pages of M. Maxime du Camp, in his admirable work,

[1] A few months only have elapsed (1893) since one of the little band of sorely tried Sisters above mentioned laid down her life in that city of Paris, for whose poor she had toiled so nobly and for whose well-being we may feel sure she offered the terrible sufferings of her last days on earth. The humility of a Little Sister forbids us to reveal her name; suffice it to say that in the world she had borne one of the noblest in France. For some years an angry looking spot on her cheek had given anxiety to her Superiors. As time went on, cancer declared itself, and an operation was declared necessary. The operation was made, but without success, and after lingering a few days in great suffering, sweetly and patiently borne, the pure soul went forth to meet her reward. We are told that the residents in the neighbourhood of the Home, by whom she was beloved as their "own *quêteuse*," affixed a metal palm-branch to the black wooden cross which alone marked her grave, with the words inscribed upon it, "Virgin and Martyr."

"La Charité privée à Paris," reprinted from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in which it was published in the year 1883, when the author, having obtained permission from the Cardinal-Archbishop, and from the Superiors, to visit the Houses at any hour he pleased, without notice or warning to the Little Sisters, in order that he might speak of these exactly as he found them, profited largely by the permission, becoming a fast friend of the Little Family whom he had soon learned to love, and himself setting the example of the benevolence and generosity he strove to call forth by his glowing pen, by sending to each of the Paris Houses a kilometer, as he pleasantly expressed it, namely, two hundred metres of linen, an indispensable article, of which he had observed the paucity.

From the capital of France, we will now turn our steps to the *midi* (south), where the Homes, owing to their local colouring, differ in many respects from those of the north. With none is such the case more so than with that of Nice, owing to its peculiar situation so close to the frontier, and to the cosmopolitan nature of its inmates. Amongst the poor old creatures, warming themselves in the sunshine, whilst their eyes rest dreamily on the orange-gardens and olive-covered hills, which rise up in view of the long, wide, and gaily painted green balconies, on which their multiform and multicoloured armchairs are drawn up in line, and the noise and turmoil of

the gay city seems as distant as the blue line of the Mediterranean away to the south, there is many a name which tells of a chequered existence, of an agitated life, stranded, perhaps, at the gaming-tables of Monte Carlo near by, and only saved from total shipwreck by the saving, outstretched hand of the Little Sisters.

To quote one out of many such instances. We noticed an old man, sitting rather apart from the rest, reading a newspaper, whose manners struck us as being extremely courteous, when he rose and bowed as we passed.

"That is M. le Comte," we were told by an old worthy, who noticed the direction of our gaze.

"Is he really a count?" we asked the bright, intelligent Good-Mother at our side.

"Yes, indeed he is," she replied; "*un vrai noble*, who squandered his fortune at Monte Carlo, and went through every phase of misery and destitution, even to the intention of committing suicide; until, at the age of seventy-two, he came to this door and implored to be received. Poor man! I told him he would never stay with us; he would never be happy in a place so different to the surroundings and habits of his whole life, that it was out of the question, in fact. For a whole year I kept the poor old dear waiting, for I could not believe he would stay with us, till he came again and again, and at last I con-

sented. Contrary to all my expectations, he settled down from the first day, never showing the least symptom of discontent, always docile, always courteous, always grateful. About a year after his entry (I knew that for years he had not approached the Sacraments), to my great joy (we never interfere, you know, with religious convictions), I saw him go up with the rest to receive Holy Communion. One day I said to him, 'Monsieur' (we always call him Monsieur), 'do you not sometimes feel it lonely with no one to speak to but these poor old souls, illiterate, for the most part, and often in their dotage?' 'My Good-Mother,' he replied, with a bright smile, 'I admire them, and feel humbled at the sight of them, do you know? I say to myself, all, or nearly all of them, have spent their lives in honest labour and hard work, whilst I have passed mine in gambling and squandering.' We often try," the Good-Mother went on to say, "to give Monsieur —— little choice morsels at table, knowing that the food must seem rough and coarse to him, but it is very difficult to manage. As the Sister passes round with her big tray, every eye is turned to see whether 'the count' is favoured. In the matter of his clothes we can manage more easily; and, if we get a pair of kid gloves given us, or a good coat, we give them to him, and he is so pleased."

Going on a little farther, the merry face of the

Good-Mother dimpled with amusement, as she stopped to speak to a tall, stately looking old man, occupied in covering up some semi-tropical plants for the evening; and presently she leant over a little paling, which divided the garden into two parts, to say a word to a black-browed, muscular old fellow, who was doing something or other to the orange trees: after which, she explained that these two had had a terrible fight the day before, from political motives, the one being French (formerly proprietor of a large hotel at Cannes), the other Italian; that they had literally torn each other's clothes from their backs, and would have throttled one another, had not a very diminutive Little Sister thrown herself between the combatants! "So I was obliged to keep them in to-day, their 'day out,'" said the Good-Mother; "but it punishes me a great deal more than it does them, and I have to keep going to say a word to each to *désennuyer* them."

Nicenes are terribly quick to fight, as an old woman, who was mending clothes, remarked to us. "These dreadful old men must always be fighting and throwing about their arms, and they don't recollect that their clothes are not new, and that they keep everybody at work to mend for them."

Another stranded victim of this world's hardships was an old Russian woman, who had passed through many a vicissitude. Coming to France, first of all

as lady's-maid, then marrying a well-to-do tradesman, whose business failed, and who finally died, leaving his widow destitute, and, moreover, blind; at the age of sixty odd, she found shelter under the hospitable roof of the Little Sisters, towards whom her gratitude and devotion is boundless. She recognizes each by her step, and even her poor sightless eyes seem to brighten, together with the rest of the large-featured countenance, when the Good-Mother —the beloved of all—enters the *salle*. Blind as she is, she can not only knit, but mend and darn her clothes, after a fashion of her own. Only on the subject of religion is she still Russian to the core.

Nice, with its beautiful climate, its sunshine and freedom from damp and fog, is often chosen as the sanatorium of Little Sisters whose health has broken down under their labours, exposed as they are to every inclemency of season in northern lands, and out of the twenty who form the little Community, there are at least five—two of them Australians—whom their Superiors have sent hither to beg a few years' grace of the warm sun, and who fulfil such light avocations as their feeble strength will admit. Alas! there is many a House, nowadays, where there are one or two Little Sisters, if not more, past work. The arduous toils and hardships of early days ruined many a constitution before its time; and as each new Foundation has been made, the youngest and

strongest Little Sisters have been sent where the work was hardest, consequently the number of those whose strength is spent, and whom infirmities have brought to a premature old age, is sadly large, and is, moreover, a heavy charge upon the Houses, which have generally quite enough to do to support their rightful number.

Nice was founded in the year 1863, and for a long while was one of the most inconvenient, most crowded, worst constructed Houses in France, bounded by a high wall on the southern side, which effectually excluded the sun from the tiny little yard which stood in lieu of a garden, and did not even contain sufficient convenience for a wash-house, the Little Sister in charge of the laundry—a no inconsiderable charge in such an establishment—being compelled for years to take her dirty linen and wash it in the bed of the river, in company with all the washerwomen of the town. Ten years ago an old gentleman, at whose house the Little Sisters were in the habit of calling once a year, came to visit the Home, and, rather to the dismay of the Sisters, found fault with everything—the dormitories were unhealthy, the beds too close, air, light, and space wanting; in fact, gave the Sisters a regular scolding for what was certainly not their fault, and finally departed in high dudgeon without giving them a penny-piece. "This good Monsieur wishes to give us a lesson in humility," said they

to each other. On the following day, the Good-Mother was called to the parlour, where she found the architect of the town, who told her that he had received instructions from Monsieur R—— (the old gentleman of the day before) to build a wing to the Home, and that he had paid the money for it down, on the condition that the building should be according to his wishes. The joy and gratitude of the Little Sisters may be better imagined than described, and was doubled when a few years later Monsieur R—— spent another winter at Nice, and again visited the Home, appearing little less dissatisfied than before in spite of the new wing, and went away shaking his head and grumbling to himself. On the following day, the architect again put in an appearance with the good news that he had received instructions to build a second wing of similar dimensions to the first for the old women, with equally spacious rooms, dormitories, etc., and with the large covered balcony running outside each floor, where the old people can spend the livelong day winter and summer, and enjoy the fresh air and lovely sunshine without the smallest fatigue or exertion. To these buildings Monsieur R—— added the purchase of a neighbouring garden, at the bottom of which another benefactor built a commodious wash-house and laundry, and thus the house at Nice, from being one of the dreariest and most circum-

scribed, is now one of the brightest and most convenient, all that it requires to make it complete being the construction of a chapel between the two new wings (an empty space has been left for the purpose, and commended to St. Joseph's especial attention) where the infirm of both sexes can have their galleries leading out of their own quarters, in which to hear Mass without being carried, as is often now the case, in the arms of a Little Sister, the present temporary chapel being in the old building, and much too small.

We will now cross the frontier into Italy, where we find the indefatigable Little Sisters pursuing their devoted calling in many of the beautiful cities for which that land is famous, and a pleasant sight it is for those who love them to find the Piccole Suore dei Poveri surrounded by universal veneration and admiration, and to read the gratitude and devotion written in the shining black eyes of their warm-hearted pensioners. It so happened that we arrived in Florence for the Feast of St. Joseph, a feast which all friends of the Little Family endeavour to spend if possible with the Congregation so dear to the great Saint, and accordingly we made our way to the outskirts of the town, to a village called San Salvi, known to tourists by a celebrated fresco of Leonardo da Vinci to be seen there. Passing the village, we reached a majestic-looking gateway, crowned with

a statue of St. Joseph. This is too grand for a Little Sisters' Home, we thought; however, we espied the well-known sentence, "Benedetta sia la mano,"[1] etc., rang at the bell, and found that the Florentines, in their generosity, had recently come to the conclusion that such ornaments to their city as the Little Sisters were ill lodged in the mean little tenement where the work took its rise, and had built them this House, capable of containing some two hundred inmates, in an airy suburb flooded with sunshine, where the wide *loggias* (or covered balconies) with which each floor was provided looked out over a view so splendid, of valley and mountain, that it seemed to us as if the miseries of even old age must be mitigated and refined by living in constant contact with so much beauty. The old people, we were told, were very gentle and tractable, the only difficulty with them being (as throughout all Italy) to teach them habits of cleanliness; they have a good spirit, in fact, without any of that terrible grumbling so common to their brethren in some other countries. Every one was *en fête*, but about twenty of the old men were distinguished by large sprays of mimosa in their button-holes, and this special adornment was because they were the proud possessors of the name of Giuseppe.[2] Flowers were everywhere, and vying with their hues were the vivid colours of the ancient

[1] Blessed be the hand. [2] Joseph.

dames' shawls, petticoats, and kerchiefs—pinks, yellows, and moss-greens predominating, sombre tints not finding favour in Italian eyes.

The first Italian Foundations were Naples and Aosta; Naples by the intermediary of Monsignore di Rende, Apostolic Nuncio, who, together with his mother the Marchesa di Rende, gave the ground and contributed largely to the building of the Home; and Aosta, a House unlike any other, where naught save the boundless love and charity of the Little Sisters kept them faithful to their task, throughout many a gloomy year when they had not even their usual consolation of feeling that the old people whom they sheltered were brought by their means to a happy death. For Aosta lies in a valley where the blessed sunshine never penetrates; where the unfortunate inhabitants are either afflicted with goître or idiotcy (the former often leading to the latter), often both; where the poverty is extreme, the privations countless, and the melancholy, moral and physical, so great, that the bright spirit of even the Little Sister was put to so great a strain in the earlier years, before some inhabitants of the neighbouring mountains found their way to the Home, that her Superiors found it necessary to remove her from time to time to other atmospheres more congenial to her mission.

During the lifetime of Pope Pius IX., in spite of

his ardent wish to see the Little Sisters established in the capital of Christendom, some untoward event invariably barred the way, and it was left for his Holiness Leo XIII. to finally request that a Foundation should be made in Rome in the year 1880, where the Little Sisters now have a large House on the Esquiline, which shelters no fewer than two hundred aged men and women, all of whom can testify to the innumerable tokens of love and forethought shown on their behalf and that of their dear Sisters by his Holiness. There are many anecdotes which tell of the affection of the Holy Fathers for these his lowliest daughters.

On the occasion of his jubilee, in the year 1888, his Holiness made the tour of the Vatican Exhibition in the company of the late Cardinal Place, who, when drawing the Pope's attention to the gifts from his own arch-diocese of Rennes, asked him if he had noticed a large and remarkable model of the Novitiate of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

"I shall be happy to see and examine it," replied his Holiness. "The Tour St. Joseph is in your diocese, then?"

"Yes, your Holiness, it is its glory."

"It is the glory of the whole Church," continued Leo XIII. "This Foundation has accomplished prodigies. It is a miracle in itself. It was I who brought the Little Sisters to Perugia, and it is now

a cause of joy to me that they are here in Rome. They are real sisters, real mothers to their aged charges. At Perugia, so much were they appreciated that they had no need to make their *quêtes;* everything they could possibly want was brought them."

Cardinal Place having gone on to mention the vast number of old people (thirty-five thousand) whom the Little Sisters now maintained by this daily *quête* of theirs in all parts of the globe, the Holy Father shed tears of emotion and admiration. And when, in conclusion, the Cardinal told his Holiness that in this Novitiate of La Tour St. Joseph, of which he had the model, there were at that moment six hundred novices, the Pope raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed joyously, "We shall see their Houses and their benefits to humanity increase and multiply yet farther, as God Himself takes care to recruit their numbers in so wonderful a manner." The Holy Father then spoke lengthily and in affectionate terms of the venerable founder and foundress.

Farther away from home even than Italy, in a city where the Crescent reigns instead of the Cross, the Little Sisters have lately planted their tent. In November, 1892, nine Sisters (including their Good-Mother), of English, French, and American nationality, landed at Constantinople, whither they had been earnestly bidden to come and cope with the misery and wretchedness to which old age is especially

exposed in the East. A wealthy proprietor living in one of the suburbs of the city (Férikim), gave them his house, which stood as it were under the shadow of a church of Our Lady of Lourdes, on the condition that they should accept him with it, and permit him to end his days amongst their old men, living as these do, and sharing in the common fare. Several Catholic ladies came forward to assist in the installation and act as interpreters. A benevolent Turk presented the little household with a donkey,[1] whose services were highly needed in consequence of the distances whence provisions had to be conveyed, and very soon the daily *quêtes* were set on foot, greatly to the amazement of the inhabitants of Constantinople, as may well be imagined, who, however, once they comprehended what these wonderful little black-cloaked women with the smiling faces wanted, proved well disposed and charitable. Nine old people were waiting to be received when the Little Sisters arrived, seven old men and two old women, the latter having been persuaded with extreme difficulty to accept the proffered hospitality, whereas the old men seemed to appreciate better the good things provided for their failing years. At first it was thought that indigent

[1] This donkey was unfortunately stolen, and Monsignore Bonetti, the Papal Nuncio, offered a fine, strong mule in its stead, which however the Sisters were obliged to refuse, as he was too big to find room in their tiny stable.

Christians only would be received, as the poor are legion in Constantinople, and the resources of a new Foundation straitened; however, by the advice of competent authorities the Little Sisters soon decided upon receiving Mahommedan, Greek, Turk, whoever, in fact, should present himself under the blessed livery of poverty and destitution, and already they have had the happiness of seeing many of their old children baptized Christians in their little chapel. The House is almost full—twenty beds are the utmost it can contain—and for the moment the expenses are many; certain articles of furniture must be purchased, beds, bedding, etc., besides heating-apparatus, water-conduits, etc., all of which require ready money. The Little Sisters, however, trust in Providence, and as Providence has never failed them yet, they have no more fears for the future in Constantinople than elsewhere.

Did they not start a few years ago for Calcutta, in a still more distant and equally heathen land? There their first domicile had been a wretched little building, breathing of poverty in every stone, their first pensioner, an old Hindoo woman, brought to them rolled up in a sheet like a child in swaddling-clothes, and accompanied by another dusky fellow-countrywoman; and with these two poor heathen creatures God's blessing had entered the House, and the work began. In the markets, no sooner was it understood

for whom the good Sisters were begging than it was an amicable dispute as to whom should be first in filling the bags and baskets with fruit and vegetables, many of the vendors insisting on leaving their stalls and carrying their gifts home for the Sisters. The climate of Calcutta is unfortunately that, with the one exception of Bône in Africa, from which the Little Sisters suffer the most severely, being, as they are, perpetually laid down with intermittent fever or dysentery.

The very nature of their work does not admit of their ceasing their labours at the hours when even the natives seek rest, and escape from the scorching rays of the sun. The food is of a kind to which they are unaccustomed; their appetites flag, and the over-tasked strength fails, especially when they walk mile after mile along the burning roads, clad in the same black habit as in Western climes, with the same heavy shoes, the only difference being the addition of a white sunshade, as imperative protection to the head. They hold their own sufferings as nothing, however, beside the happiness of seeing how many heathen souls they are able to win to Christ, and, crowning joy of all, the House at Calcutta has been the first to send a native postulant to the Novitiate at home.

Would that we could follow the steps of these heroines of charity around the world, and tell of all their wondrous deeds, of all the wonderful interposi-

tions of Providence on their behalf, and of all the souls saved, as they cross seas and mountains, to America, to Hindostan, to Africa, to Oceania, founding new families, starting in absolute ignorance of the languages of the countries where they are about to make a home, learning these whilst teaching their aged children to love them, and through their means the good God Who has sent them for the sole purpose of leading souls to His feet! Would that we could narrate the hundreds and hundreds of touching and beautiful anecdotes which are to be told of all their Foundations in the East and in the West! But, alas! records are scarce, and can only be gleaned from word of mouth, the humility and self-effacement of the Little Sisters rising up invariably like a high wall, in order to shield their modesty from the public gaze.

CHAPTER XV.

LAST WORDS—HOW TO HELP THE LITTLE SISTERS.

And now, even as we began this little work with Jeanne Jugan, the first *quêteuse*, so we will end it by telling of the last years and holy death of Sœur Marie de la Croix.

For fourteen years had she enjoyed the peace and repose of the Tour St. Joseph. At their commencement, the disease of the heart from which she had long suffered, and which had been aggravated by her life of exertion, had led her Superiors to fear that her rest in their midst would be short. Not so was it the case, however, thanks to their tender care of her. Towards the close of her life, Jeanne became totally blind. This infirmity did not, however, prevent her from still rendering service by the edification which her recollected demeanour and her visible nearness to God gave to all around her. She would spend hours amongst the novices in their work-rooms, making them recite prayers and *novenas* with her for benefactors, and often the "Hail, Maries!" were so numerous

that the half of them had to be left for the next day. Recreation hours she passed with the Little Sisters, for whom she had always some encouraging word in season, and they, on their side, looked up to her with a veneration which she herself was far from suspecting, never giving a thought to the signal services which she had rendered to the Little Family. To the last her face maintained its calm, sweet expression, leading those who had thought her so very old when she was in middle life, to exclaim, when they saw her again, walking about the grounds, tall and erect as ever, leaning on the arm of a young novice, "Why, our good Jeanne Jugan has not aged one bit!"

It was a real pleasure to her when old and tried friends of her early days came to see her, with whom she could talk over the beginnings of the humble work which had grown with such a marvellous growth; she never tired of asking after the benefactors who had helped her, and would relate anecdote after anecdote of her *quêtes*, and of the wonderful things Providence did for her, opening doors at her touch, and pouring alms into her lap in houses where she had scarcely hoped to be received. Everything spoke of God to her, and her heart literally overflowed with thankfulness and admiration at the sight of such a large family of novices gathered round her at the Tour, whilst her joy on hearing of the fervour and zeal of its distant members knew no bounds. It

would be difficult to describe the extent of her veneration for her Superiors, in whom she saw God represented—a veneration which was coupled with the tenderest admiration for her Good-Mother General, always in her eyes the little Marie-Augustine Jamet of years gone by for whom she had never ceased to entertain the deepest gratitude for having, as she simply expressed it, "admitted an unworthy old woman like me into her company." Jeanne never had understood and never could understand that there had been anything in her own conduct worthy of commendation, whilst every additional year which she spent at the Tour deepened and strengthened her admiration for the wonderful powers of administration and direction, the unalterable confidence in Providence, the spirit of obedience and profound humility of her Good-Mother General, who took a never-failing delight (as she does to this day) in reminding the great and powerful of this world, with whom she may be brought into contact, that she was once a poor, lowly little seamstress.

Many and long were the hours which Jeanne spent upon her knees before the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus in the Tabernacle had ever been the magnet of her soul; and now that her work as Martha was over, and she had leisure to take Mary's place, and sit at the feet of her Lord, she was so constantly in the chapel, adoring her Master, and pleading for the

wants of her dear Family, that the Little Sisters were wont to speak of her smilingly as their "spiritual commissioner;" so large was the business which passed through her hands of praying for vocations, perseverance of novices, extension of the work, material wants of the Congregation, souls of the aged pensioners, etc. The saving of souls had always been a special mission of Jeanne's, and who shall say how many of the miraculous conversions obtained amongst the poor old creatures in the different Homes throughout the world were not due to the devout prayers of this fervent Little Sister?

In spite of increasing weakness, Jeanne persevered to the last in assisting at the six-o'clock Mass in the chapel. Gradually but surely her strength declined. On the morning of the last day of her life, she had risen at the usual hour, having prepared herself for Communion by a devout confession the night before, seeming no weaker than usual, and no word of complaint had passed her lips, when, as she was saying a decade of her rosary, the Little Sister who was helping her to dress, was filled with consternation at seeing her change colour, and suddenly fall forward unconscious into her arms. Jeanne lingered on after this for a few hours—long enough to receive Extreme Unction, and for her Sisters, gathered round her bed, to hear her murmuring perpetually words of love to her Divine Mother. "O Mary!" they heard her

say distinctly, "you know that you are my Mother; do not forsake me now!" And again, after a moment's silence, "Eternal Father, open Thy gates this day to the most abject of Thy little daughters, who longs to see Thy face!" A while later, and very faintly, "O Mary! my good Mother! Come to me! You know how I love you, and how I long to behold you!" After this last ejaculation, the lips which had so often opened to praise and bless their Divine Mother, closed for ever, and gently and peacefully, with a long-drawn sigh, Jeanne Jugan went to meet the God Whom she had so faithfully served.

It was at ten o'clock in the morning, on August 29, 1879, that Sister Marie de la Croix breathed her last, at the age of eighty-six years.

It has been urged that the Little Sister of the Poor, owing to the active nature of her life, has not leisure to practise much spirituality. This is an error; it is true that she cannot be constantly in choir, or undertake the great Fasts, but if ever work was prayer (as theology teaches us it is), her life is perpetual incense in the sight of Almighty God, doubly sanctified by its utter self-abnegation and devotedness to others. She may indeed be said to have no self, whilst, as she traces the Divine lineaments of our Lord Jesus Christ in the face of every poor aged creature whom she tends, her life is one continual union with her Lord, and we might almost fancy that her Rule was obedi-

ence to the words, "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart," so truly is this injunction of her Master's the very essence of her being. Except at four o'clock in the morning, when she makes her meditation, and lays in a store of spiritual food for the day, recollectedness would be difficult to her unless she were thus in constant communion with God, for even in chapel there is at every moment some tottering old woman to lead to her chair, a crutch to pick up—some requirement or another on the part of her children to call her from her prayers. So she says her Office as best she may; in chapel when possible; if not, then walking along a country lane, sitting in the little-covered cart, or waiting in a passage. Is not God everywhere?

One of the most remarkable points about the Little Family is the resemblance to each other in spirit, we might almost say in feature, of its members, and their deep attachment to one another—circumstances for which they often thank God, and which they attribute in a great measure to their having had the shining light of the examples of their venerable Founders for so many blessed years before their eyes, and to the special and wonderful training which they receive at the Novitiate of La Tour.

There is a something special about La Tour St. Joseph, an atmosphere of peace, holy joy, and sanctifying grace which is felt, not only by the Little

Sisters, who dearly love this beautiful home of theirs, but by every one who enters its precincts, something of the same kind of sensation which we feel on approaching certain sanctuaries. The whole place is essentially home-like, down to the very watch-dog, a fat, sleek collie, who comes lazily to greet the visitor, wagging his tail, as the latter enters the gate over-shaded by a spreading horse-chestnut tree, and is met by one or two bright-faced Sisters from the lodge hard by. It resembles an English country-seat more than anything else. It is true there is the large chapel rising out of the midst of the grey stone buildings, the size of which latter may be estimated by the fact that the corridor in one of the principal wings is three hundred feet long, but the austere appearance of a convent is taken off by the amount of life everywhere to be seen; by the bullock-carts plying backwards and forwards; by the fifty or sixty cows led in and out at intervals by an old man (who resembles many an aged pensioner elsewhere, and has been thirty years on the place), to graze in the vast meadow where once lay the stagnant waters of a lake several acres in dimensions, which, when drained, supplied the poor for miles round with fish; by the whole stir of a busy farm-life in which novices in straw hats take their full share. The beautifully kept roads, gravelled walks, plantations, and copses have a truly park-like aspect, not to speak of the orchards, and kitchen-

gardens, and miles of wall over which vines and fruit trees are trained with a care and attention to symmetry which would gladden the eye of the most particular English gardener. The ground is undulating and wooded; therefore, at every turn, the eye is gratified by a fresh landscape. Sometimes we come unexpectedly upon a patch of garden, where bright flowers are grown for the chapel; sometimes upon a little shrine hidden under a natural canopy of green trees; sometimes on an old ruin dating from the Knights Templars, or the large laundries, with every appliance for drying and hanging out clothes, and here, there, and everywhere a plentiful supply of pure, fresh, running water, which has its source in the grounds.

The Good-Mother General lives in the original house, the Château of the Counts of St. Pern, in front of the Novitiate buildings, with her Assistants-General round her. Her countenance, on every line of which is written a singular benevolence and sweetness, coupled with great determination and strength of character, shows by the lines and furrows round the eyes and mouth that she has reached the age of seventy odd years—fifty of which have been spent as a Little Sister; otherwise she is as active and energetic as many a young woman, walking briskly for several hours a day, to visit different parts of the property; writing never less than twenty or thirty letters daily

to her daughters in various parts of the world (and, as they say, expressing more in five lines of her graphic pen than do her amanuenses in four pages), dictating others, listening to the business matters of which every day's post brings in a large amount, taking the keenest interest in everything which concerns the Little Family; and often and often remaining on her knees half the night in prayer on their behalf, in spite of acute sufferings caused her frequently by rheumatic pains in the head, which, as she simply expresses it, feel like a hive of bees buzzing inside her brain.

And now, when the weight of years is added to that of the many charges and anxieties which rest upon the shoulders of the venerable Foundress, Almighty God has seen fit to sanctify her yet more by laying upon her a cross to bear, so ponderous that, were her soul less valiant than it is, she might well sink under the burden of her sorrow and her increased responsibilities, and that is the loss she has sustained in the guide, stay, and counsellor of her long life, the companion of her arduous labours, and the Father of the Little Family which he engendered to the cause of charity and religion, Père Le Pailleur. Neither is this a loss by death, which would have been sad indeed, but less painful, as coming directly from the hand of Almighty God. The woe and consternation of the Little Sisters and of all who love them, passed

all description, when the following touching letter of farewell was received throughout the various Houses of the Congregation, in the year 1890.[1]

"My Little Children,

"I have attained the age of seventy-eight years. It is a great age, and I feel the weight of it bidding me prepare for my death, which cannot now be far distant.

"I consider the work which God gave me to do as fulfilled, and I have the conviction that I am acting in accordance with His Will in devoting that portion of my life which still remains to preparing for death and eternity in prayer and retirement.

"I bid you adieu for ever.

"Absent in body, my heart will be always with the Little Family.

"Pray much for me, my little children, as I shall pray much for you.

"I beg of God that He will bless you.

"Your Father,

"Le Pailleur, *Sacerdos.*

"June 11, 1890."

It is not for us to forestall in any manner the decisions of Holy Church, and touching this matter of

[1] From Rome, in which city Père Le Pailleur has taken his retreat.

the complete withdrawal of Père Le Pailleur from the direction of his Congregation (a retirement which we believe was brought about at the request of his ecclesiastical Superiors), we can only conclude that, as from time immemorial Saints have always suffered tribulation for Christ's sake, the Good-Father is no exception to their number, and that this furnace of tribulation through which he, and his children with him, are passing, was needed to refine the gold of his precious work yet more and more, and render it even more worthy than it was before of being carried to the feet of his Divine Lord, when his earthly pilgrimage shall have come to an end. In support of the term "Saint," we may quote the words which the late Cardinal Place, Archbishop of Rennes, used at a large meeting over which he presided. When speaking of the Little Sisters, "I have just been paying a visit to the Tour St. Joseph," he said, "and I have seen that which is very rarely to be seen, an Institution which during the life of its founder and foundress has taken a development hitherto unheard of in all the annals of religion. In this Convent there is a most powerful centre of religious life, the fire of which nothing henceforth shall be able to extinguish, for it has been kindled upon the heart of a Saint!"

A wave of trial seems to be, as it were, passing over the heads of the Little Family in these present days, in France generally, and at St. Servan in particular—

the town where we should expect to find them held in highest honour, and of which its sole and only reason for being known to the world at large is the fact of its being the birthplace of the Little Sisters of the Poor. How true it is that no man is ever a prophet in his own country! Their very lowliness and humility is still a stumbling-block to many; they are held in slight esteem because they are poorly clad, of poor parentage often, simple of speech, of retiring manners, and so carefully guarded by their Constitutions against any possible creeping of a worldly spirit into their Houses, that it is impossible for the would-be zealous to mix themselves up in the government of their old pensioners, as can be done in the case of certain other charities.

It will hardly be believed that the House in St. Servan is still *the poorest in France!* Its existence is one incessant struggle, and more than once it has been on the point of closing for want of means. Were it not for the strangers who spend the summer at Dinard and Paramé, it would be impossible for the struggle to continue, and what a disgrace would that be to Brittany! One of the sources of maintenance of the aged Servannais, our readers will be surprised to learn, consists in large sacks of broken bread and forcemeat, which are sent, upon an average, weekly from London, sometimes oftener; the generosity of the English eating-houses and pork-butchers enabling

the Little Sisters of that city to give of their plenty to the poor of St. Servan, which sacks of provisions the South-Western Company are kind enough to transmit gratuitously in their steamers. No; the novelty of the work has worn off, as we said before. "We must divide our donations now," the poor Little Sisters are told when they make their rounds, and receive a quarter the former sum; the givers forgetting that if alms are reduced, appetites are in no wise diminished, the requirements of the Home in no wise altered, that the work is the same as ever, the merit of the Sisters no less than before. Not only have the dear Little Sisters to suffer from indifference here, where they might expect to receive most love and honour, but even their old charges are exceptionally trying to them. Because the work took its rise in St. Servan, the inhabitants think that the Home is theirs by right; and instead of being grateful for the care and attention which they receive, are perpetually dissatisfied, always grumbling, and are (the old women especially) rarely willing to put a hand to the smallest manual occupation. As a Sister said to us one day, "If we could only see a smile upon their faces, we should be so pleased!" Whilst the Sisters dare not treat them in the tender, caressingly familiar way they do their old children in other parts of the world, for the Servannais would either grow insolent or declare that they were being made fun of. Not only are these old

things *grumpy*, to use an expressive term, but they are often actually malevolent, spreading all sorts of tales about their good Sisters in the houses to which they go and beg coppers on the days of their *sorties* (a practice which the Little Sisters extremely dislike), that they are scantily fed, that they have no sugar in their coffee (when it is a fact that this article for the *café-au-lait* alone amounts to a hundred francs per month), that they have nothing to drink but water, that they are punished (such punishments!) for the slightest misdemeanour, that their life is that of a prisoner—a thousand such absurd statements which some of their listeners are credulous enough to accept, even allowing themselves to be prejudiced thereby against these good, patient, devoted Sisters.

One idea against which the latter have perpetually to contend is that "they are so rich they cannot need to be always coming to beg!" Rich, indeed, they are in Houses all the world over, rich in indigent poor, rich in the alms and charity of generous benefactors, rich, above all, in trust in that Divine Providence which has never yet failed them at their need; if it were otherwise, how would they live? "Our good God is so rich," said the Good-Mother of this much-tried House, "He only waits to be asked. He can do anything He likes, can He not?" when the news of a most heavy and unexpected payment to be made came upon her, of which she was utterly in-

capable of seeing the possibility of meeting, humanly speaking. This was the yearly emolument of a chaplain. In the case of some of the Houses, a kind benefactor has built a residence for the chaplain, thus lessening his expenses, which are otherwise, if he has no private means of his own, a great outlay to the Little Sisters, as the ministry of a resident priest is naturally of the utmost importance to their old charges; one who will instruct them, remind them of the religious truths which so many have forgotten, talk to them, gain their confidence, and devote himself to the work of their sanctification.

The little garret in the Rue du Centre, which Jeanne Jugan shared with Fanchon Aubert, is now the property of the Little Sisters, and is the object of many a pious pilgrimage by strangers during the bathing-season, some of whom travel many miles in order to visit the lowly cradle of so glorious a work. A white marble slab is affixed to the wall of the house, which gives the date when it was occupied by the first Little Sisters.

A few words more remain to be said before we take leave of our kind readers, and they are upon the help which each and all of us can render to these devoted women, gifts of money apart, in ways which perhaps do not occur to every mind, or else are deemed too trivial and insignificant to be worthy the offering. First of all, we can help them by our

personal love and sympathy. The Little Sisters, for all their heroism, for all their holiness, are human, and amidst all their *quêtes* amongst strangers, all the visits of ceremony, curiosity, or interest in the well-being of some of their old charges, which they receive, it is a consolation to them, and a happiness as well, to find a real *friend*, one who understands their spirit and their work, one who can feel with them in their joys, sorrows, and difficulties, and does not look upon them—as, alas! many do—as mere holy machines for the care of aged indigence.

It is incredible how few, even amongst the charitable, think of the personal wants of the Little Sisters; they are ready to give food, clothing, bedding, and what not for the old people, but the thought that the Sisters themselves can ever want such things never crosses their minds! They do not reflect how quickly the cloaks and dresses of the *quêteuses* wear out, perpetually exposed as these are to rain and wind, scorching sun, dust, and mud, and that to replace them costs money—the cloak alone requiring six yards of serge. Petticoats in the same way, likewise shoe-leather, likewise stockings in the case of feet which are rarely ever still; every article of the Little Sister's clothing is worn out a hundred-fold sooner than are those of her charges. In cold and damp countries she must wear flannel, or else, with the constant exposure to the elements, she would soon be incapacitated from

her work by rheumatism or phthisis ; in hot climates she must wear linen underclothing, which costs more than would cotton ; she requires sheets to her bed, although often and often, in order to supply the deficiencies of her beloved charges, she has slept upon a sack of maize, or a bundle of straw sewn up in some old packing-cloths, for months at a time. She is sometimes laid low with illness ; fever, or some such malady, keeps her a prisoner to the infirmary for weeks, after which, in order to restore her strength, stronger tonics, quinine especially, older wine, and better food are required than the Good-Mother can provide, and which, did they only think of it—were they only sufficiently intimate with the Little Sisters to know of the want—doubless many a kind-hearted person would be delighted to send.

It is not enough either to contribute at the door when the *quêteuses* call, so many times in the course of the year. If we want to be really helpful to the Little Sisters, we must go to them also, and use our intelligence in reading between the lines, as it were, of their modesty and selflessness, and discover the individual wants which they are studiously careful never to bring into notice.

Attention to the sacristies is another means of helping. These are generally very poverty-stricken, as few people assist at the offices of the chapel, where there is neither music nor great eloquence to attract

them, and so they do not observe that the vestments are threadbare and patched, and that the altar-linen is of the coarsest description, that there are often no flowers except a few very elementary paper-bouquets, that the sanctuary-carpet is small and shabby, etc. A chasuble or a cope the Sisters do sometimes receive from some kind benefactress who embroiders it with her own hands; but linen is scarcely ever given, and we have seen a whole Community more delightedly grateful for an altar-cloth of fine texture than they would have been for a handsome vestment. "It seems to come nearer to Our Blessed Lord," they said. For those who cannot afford to do more, a few yards of crochet-lace with which to trim the altar-cloths; a girdle, an edging for an alb, simply worked in darning-cotton upon coarse net; all such gifts give great pleasure, and are of great use to the Little Sisters, whilst those persons whose means do not allow of even gifts such as these, may render service by helping the Sister-Sacristan to mend and darn. We have seen, moreover, beautiful carpets for the sanctuary made of patchwork out of little pieces of silk and velvet, and lined afterwards with felt, which have done duty for many years, and have been an adornment to the chapels, thoroughly in keeping with the spirit of poverty, as practised by the Little Sisters, in the utilizing of every kind of cast-off remnant. One of these carpets in question led to

the assistance of the good Sisters in a second way; two fashionable dressmakers, hearing of the holy use which was made of the sweepings of their work-room, had a large box placed in one corner, ticketed "For the Little Sisters of the Poor," in which all the patterns, cuttings, and snippings of stuffs, silks and satins, velvets and ribbons, were carefully gathered together, the apprentices cheerfully foregoing their share of the little profits which they had hitherto made by the sale of these remnants and declaring that "it would bring them better luck in the end!"

In certain towns, ladies have formed themselves into charitable associations, their object being to work and mend for the Little Sisters (who have themselves so little time for stitching), each subscribing some small sum towards the work materials, others taking home the sewing to do, when the Sisters have a press of work on hand. Many are the devices which a charitable heart can suggest, as for instance, a lady, the wife of an Inland Revenue officer, anxious to make a little money for the good Sisters, set herself to learn the art of artificial flower-making, established a class of the young girls of her acquaintance, and then sold the flowers herself, going from house to house with a basketful of them on her arm.

In schools, many a practice may be pursued by which to help, and at the same time familiarize the minds of the children with the thought and

love of the poor, a thought which, strange as it may seem to many who from their earliest years have had the habit of accompanying their mothers into cottage and garret in search of the sick and needy, never occurs to hundreds of boys and girls of the richer classes. Thus a good plan, which has been followed in some places, is to give the pupils certain articles of food in reward for a certain number of good marks: so many potatoes, so many pots of jam, for so many marks, etc., which they distribute afterwards to the Little Sisters' old men and women with their own hands. Another is that followed in a large girls' school in the South of France, where the children have as their work-tasks, clothes to make for the Little Sisters' old people, and at the end of the school year each child has her own packet, the result of her industry, given to her, which she takes away and presents to the House nearest to her own home, by which custom the Little Sisters have told us the way is often paved for their own visits, in later years, to houses of which these young girls have become the mistresses, when it is rare indeed if the latter do not retain an affectionate interest in the old men and women for whom they worked as children.

At a certain Seminary of which the neophytes were frequently in the habit of making the Home for the Aged the object of their walks, one of the seminarists

overheard a Little Sister complaining of the difficulty she had in procuring matches; whereupon he immediately went round to all his companions, asking each for the matches which he had in his pocket, and presently handed over a large boxful to the Little Sister. This gave the seminarists a bright idea, and on a certain day in the year, before the vacation began, they got together a regular bazaar of articles for the Little Sisters, the strangest assortment possible of shoes, slippers, logs of wood, bundles of faggots for fire-lighting, umbrellas, bottles of oil, basins, cans of paraffin and other substances, half-filled medicine-bottles, inkstands, knives and forks, old hats, neck-ties, drinking-glasses, penholders, and what not, which, when placed on the floor before the much-diverted old people at the Home, greatly resembled the pictures with which many of our readers are familiar of the Little Sister-*quêteuse* in London returning from her rounds, and displaying the motley contents of her cart to the tenants of the day-room at Portobello Road.

Nothing, in fact, however old, however insignificant, comes amiss to the Little Sisters; there is absolutely *nothing* which cannot be turned to use in some way or another in their hives of industry, and therefore there is no one who need ever feel that want of fortune hinders his or her helpfulness. To begin with, as we have said over and over again, scraps of

food and broken victuals (if the pieces of bread are placed separately, in a bag for instance, and hung up to dry, they keep better), coffee-grounds, tea-leaves, dripping, lees of wine, etc., are most precious—even the remnants of a cake, for instance, from our own plate, which does not seem worth the giving, and yet which, dipped in a little wine, will make a dainty meal for some poor sick bedridden old creature. In the infirmaries great pleasure may be given by the personal distribution of the remains of a cream or some such *entremet* which will not keep good until the carts and cans come round to collect, and of which the tiniest tea-spoonful gives real pleasure to these old souls, who to the last dearly love an unaccustomed dainty.

In every House all the world over the greatest joy of the old men is to smoke, and although the Little Sisters distribute a daily ration of tobacco all round, they never succeed in satisfying the demand, and often go and hunt about in the streets themselves for cigar-ends, which they look upon as very precious booty, and chop up into tobacco for the old men's pipes. We have seen in the smoking-room of a certain hotel, a little tin box affixed to the wall, with an inscription written over it, "Please put all your cigar-ends in here, for the old men at the Little Sisters' Home," which box the Little Sisters came round once a week to empty, and were delighted to

find almost invariably well filled. The kindness of this hotel proprietor might be imitated in many a smoking-room, public or private, at the cost of so little trouble to the givers that few would mind that trouble, if they reflected on the happiness which they are bestowing on these poor old fellow-smokers of theirs, who declare that the tobacco thus made from cigars is far and away superior to that of the military stores, whence the Sisters procure their daily provisions.

The lead-paper which is wrapped round chocolate, tea, tobacco, etc., the capsules of wine and brandy bottles, etc., are also of great service to the Sisters, if only people will take the trouble of putting these by for them, as they sell them to printers for type-setting purposes with considerable profit. The same is the case with old sardine, soap, and other tin boxes, these finding their market amongst the manufacturers of toy soldiers. Old writing-paper, old cards, old newspapers, old corks, old sponges, old shoes, old bottles, all have their use or their sale. Nothing is lost. Old block-almanacks are in great request, as the large figures are cut out and pasted on a card, and are useful to mark the number of each old pensioner's bed, and of each corresponding compartment in linen-room and wardrobe. We have already drawn attention to the wonderful quilts of many colours, which form a striking feature in every Little

Sisters' dormitory, made out of shop-patterns, and to the waistcoats and skull-caps constructed out of little pieces of cloth; and may add that even smaller and apparently useless scraps and cuttings find their use, shreds of tape serving for the place on which to mark; narrow strips of print being converted into apron-strings; old faded ribbons dyed; old furniture-trimming and worn-out bell-ropes, when unravelled, being knitted into good warm winter stockings; old broken cardboard boxes used for fire-lighting purposes, packing-cases serving as tables and chairs when neatly covered with an old skirt or petticoat which had become too threadbare to keep its owner warm. Endless are the devices, wonderful the ingenuity of which every colony of Little Sisters gives daily and hourly exemplification, and consoling it is for us, whatever be our position in life, to feel that we have it in our power, and that easily, to help them in their touching work. As a last example of devotion to the good Sisters, and to the imitation of their spirit of poverty at the same time (an example more admirable than imitable, our readers will perhaps think), we may mention that of a gentleman living at the present time, and the possessor of many thousands a year, who, besides frequent and large donations to the Little Sisters, makes an invariable practice of travelling third-class, and of giving them the difference between the third- and the first-class

fares, a practice to which this gentleman thinks he owes the grace of having had a daughter of his own recently received into the Little Family which he venerates.

And now our labour of love is ended. That it may, by making the Little Sisters and their beautiful work better known, awaken wider sympathy and fresh love on their behalf, is the earnest wish of the unworthy writer; and, in the words of the prayer which the Little Sisters daily offer for their benefactors as well as for their aged children, may all the friends of these true friends of humanity "have the grace to love God in this world, to die a happy death, and to possess everlasting blessedness!"

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing pages were written, a grievous trial has befallen the Little Family in the death of the Good-Mother General. Nothing in the Good-Mother General's health had prepared her children for such a blow. On the afternoon of September 17, 1893, after writing no fewer than seven business-letters, she had received, one after the other, eighty of her daughters, who had come from a distance to make a retreat at the Mother-House, and had spoken an appropriate word to each. She was about to follow these to the chapel for Benediction, when, as she stood with her hand on the door of her room, she was stricken with paralysis. For two days she lingered, deprived of the power of speech, but fully conscious, till on Thursday, September 19, Marie Jamet, the humble work-girl of St. Servan, laid down her life in the seventy-fourth year of her age, and the fifty-first year of her religious profession, under the name, revered and beloved throughout the world at large, of Marie-Augustine de la Compassion, Good-Mother General of the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

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